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UNITARIANISM THE ESSENCE OF VITAL CHRISTIANITY:

A SERMON,

Preached at George's Meeting, Exeter,

July 10, 1817,

BEFORE

THE MEMBERS OF

THE WESTERN UNITARIAN SOCIETY

AND OF

THE DEVON AND CORNWALL ASSOCIATION.

By JOHN KENRICK, M. A.

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Unit.

A SERMON,

&c.

1 Tim. vi. 2, 3, 4.

These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words.

If the Deity have seen fit to depart from the ordinary course of his operations in the moral world, and give to his creatures a miraculous communication of truth, what should we reasonably expect to be the character and the tendency of this revealed doctrine? Is it not that it should be "a doctrine according to godliness," tending to strengthen and exalt the devout affections, and through them to perfect and refine the personal and social virtues? The moral education of his rational offspring is evidently the object to which the system of things in which we form a part has chiefly been devoted by its divine author; and we shall see little of its wisdom, and feel little of its beauty and beneficence, unless we consider its connexion with man himself, who, of

all the living things that people it, is alone capable of deriving from it any moral or religious impressions. If suns arose upon us, only to light us to the everlasting darkness of the tomb; if all the stores which nature lavishes around us, served no other purpose than to supply the growth of those bodies, which must ere long say to corruption, "Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister;" if all the order and the beauty which we behold with so much delight, were but the decoration of the stage across which we were to pass and then vanish into nothing; what disappointment and humiliation would mingle with the gratitude and wonder which the contemplation of it called forth! We know, however, that all these things have a higher object; that they are designed to awaken in us the belief of a superior power, by which we and every thing that we behold were made; to draw forth our affections of love and reverence to the God whom we recognise by the works of his hands; to unfold the bud of those religious dispositions which our moral nature contains, and gradually to form, beneath this coarse covering of mortality, a spiritual being, whose powers, after all imperfectly developed in the present state of things, shall be carried for-

ward to perfection in another. The connexions with our fellow creatures into which we are thrown, are not designed merely to enable us to obtain enjoyments for ourselves beyond what a solitary condition would yield, or single strength supply; nor the affections which we form by means of this intercourse, merely to lessen the burdens and enhance the joys of life: this part of our frame, also, has a higher aspect than to the mere things of time and sense; the habitual affections which are constantly growing up within us, will be as indestructible as the intellectual and moral principle in which they have their seat. The laws which connect our actions with their consequences, all tend to show that our true happiness is to be found in obedience to the will of God, and to the dictates of virtuous moderation; they encourage to the practice of godliness, by connecting with it the promise of the life that now is. If then this be the evident design of God, both in the constitution of man and the course of his providence, why should we suppose that revelation has any other object, than to complete that which natural religion begins, but leaves imperfect? The God from whom they proceed is the same; the creatures to whom they are given are the same, in respect to their powers, their

weaknesses, their wants, and their destination; nor is it easy to conceive the possible purpose of a revelation, which, instead of strengthening the motives to godliness, should consist of doctrines which were contradictory to our natural notions of morality, or had no practical influence in the promotion of it. It would require strong evidence to make us believe that the Deity has interposed, not with the merciful purpose of relieving the mind of his creatures struggling with the difficulties which the contemplation of his nature and his ways presents, but to give them impossibilities for difficulties, and contradictions for obscurities: or that he has sent his messenger into the world to recall us from the error of believing him so merciful and benignant, as the infant simplicity of unassisted reason had taught us to believe that the universal parent must be. Men may vaunt of the sublimity which religion derives from unintelligible mysteries, or the value of the homage rendered to God by the prostration of the understanding in receiving doctrines to which no meaning can be attached; but the ultimate standard by which the truth and worth of revelation are estimated, will be and must be its tendency to promote practical holiness. No doctrines that are not according to godliness can long be

held as parts of religion, in an age of freedom and reflection; they may be imposed by force, but without it they must be modified or renounced. The same criterion which distinguishes the pure gold of the gospel from the spurious fabrications of impostors, serves also to determine which of the different systems which pass as Christianity contains the largest share of uncorrupted truth. We shall not, therefore, I trust, be employed in a manner unsuitable to the object to which this day's services are professedly devoted, if I briefly review those doctrines of Christianity which make it deserve the title of "the doctrine according to godliness," and endeavour to ascertain which contains the strongest marks of truth—those views which the great majority profess, or our own simple, reviled, and, if the arm of bigotry were as powerful as its passions are malignant, I might still add, our *persecuted* creed.

1. Christianity is a doctrine according to godliness, because it teaches THE UNITY OF GOD. Although the world, from the first, had not been left without a witness of the eternal power and godhead of its Creator, yet mankind soon lost the idea of his being one, spiritual, undivided essence; degraded him by assimilation to human or even brutal forms;

ascribed to him the sinful passions of humanity; substituted the likeness of corruptible things, for his incorruptible nature; and divided his sole prerogative of dominion and providence among a multitude of deities, who peopled the elements and carried on the affairs of the world. He did not, however, give up the whole earth to be deluged by the torrent of idolatry, polytheism, and their attendant abominations; one little spot lifted its head above the waters of the flood, and afforded a refuge and a resting-place to the doctrines of pure religion, while error and iniquity prevailed and increased upon the rest of the earth. In the bosom of the family of Abraham, settled in the land of Canaan, under the Mosaic dispensation, and kept from coalescing with its idolatrous neighbours by a peculiar system of laws and institutions, the great truth of the Divine Unity was professed and cherished, being taught in the most positive and solemn manner in the commandments, and guarded from corruption by the exclusion of every practice which could lead the people away from their belief in it. The occasional relapses of the Israelites into idolatry showed more strongly the power of their institutions, and the wisdom of God who watched over their history, since they could thus be called

back from the seducing doctrines and rites of their heathen neighbours, to their own purer faith and more rigid laws. Many changes in the political condition of the world were necessary, uniting its distant parts in a bond of reciprocal communication and dependence, before the doctrine of the Unity of God, and the other truths which are inseparably connected with it, could be generally diffused; and till that time arrived they remained within the protecting fence of Judaism. The river which at first flowed only around the garden of God, and watered its sacred inclosure, issued forth at last, divided into four mighty streams to visit every quarter of the globe; and thus, in the fullness of time, the doctrine of the Divine Unity, incorporated with the more comprehensive system of Christianity, established itself in all the civilized parts of the world, marking the progress of its triumph over existing superstitions, by altars overthrown and temples deserted by their worshippers.

Need I undertake to prove that Christianity, in teaching the unity of God and exterminating polytheism, has shown itself preeminently "a doctrine according to godliness?" Rather, let those who would maintain the contrary show me the nation of ancient or modern times, which has worshipped a multi-

plicity of gods, without debasing itself by the puerilities, and defiling itself with the horrors and pollutions, of superstition. The mythology of the Greeks and Romans may be called *elegant* by him, who contemplates it only in the breathing marbles which embodied the forms of their divinities, or in the poetry to which their agency gives majesty and animation; but he would revoke the strange epithet could he see it as it was, inflaming the brutal appetites of the vulgar, exercising no moral influence over the minds of the majority, and secretly despised by the lettered and reflecting few. And could the dark grottos of Hindoo idolatry utter forth their sepulchral voice to tell us what rites honour and what sacrifices propitiate the dæmons whose monstrous images are carved upon their walls, we should see what a doctrine of ungodliness polytheism still continues to be. If you once begin to divide the attributes of the one God among a multitude of deities, you lower them to the human standard, and prepare the way for ascribing to him not the figure only, but the weaknesses, the passions and the vices of mortals. At the same time you enfeeble and distract the devotional feelings: for one God only can be worshipped with all the heart and with all the mind and with all the strength.

Whatever the being whom I address, wants of boundless power, a perfect, all-comprehensive wisdom, and inexhaustible goodness, is something taken from the undoubting confidence with which I should otherwise repose myself upon him; it is something wanting to the fullness of that feeling of filial reverence and love, with which I should otherwise pour forth my soul in prayer to him, who had all the riches of the universe in his power and every energy of nature under his controul. For examples of the strength of devotional feeling, and the sublimity of devotional poetry, we must seek among those nations which have worshipped the one true and living God.

I observe further, that not only does Christianity claim an immeasurable advantage over Paganism in this respect, as a doctrine according to godliness, but that every doctrine calling itself a part of Christianity, which tends to weaken and obscure the notion of the Divine Unity, however it may claim to be a *peculiar* doctrine, a *vital* doctrine, an *evangelical* doctrine, does in reality destroy that, which is the great peculiarity, the vital principle, of true religion, to which prophets, evangelists and apostles have borne their united and most zealous testimony. When I read in the first article of our national church, the emphatic declaration " that there is but one liv-

ing and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions, of infinite wisdom and goodness, the maker and preserver of all things visible and invisible," I recognise the simple and impressive truths of Scripture, sublime, consistent and intelligible: but when I proceed, "and in unity of this godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost," I have exchanged scriptural truths for the words in which man's wisdom teaches the doctrines of its own invention. If I turn to the writings of those who have professed to maintain and to explain this doctrine, to learn what its meaning may be, I find an eloquent dignitary of the church in whose articles it appears, declaring "that it is both heresy and nonsense to understand the word persons, as applied to the Trinity, in any other way than of three distinct infinite minds*;" and I feel myself trembling on the very verge of polytheism. If I place myself at the feet of another great master in Israel, and am told that the three persons in the godhead are only three relations which the one God bears to his creatures†, I am amazed at the

* Sherlock's Vindication, p. 66.

† The doctrine of Dr. Wallis, approved by the University of Oxford. See his Considerations on the Trinity, p. 7.

perverse ingenuity which could veil this simple truth in the mysterious language of the article which I have quoted. How unlike to the clear, unambiguous declaration of Scripture; "To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by him!" You may darken and confuse this statement by comments and additions, but you cannot increase its clearness or its force. In fact, however the framers of articles and creeds may have contrived to accumulate antithesis and contradiction in their statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, the great labour of every one who undertakes to explain it is, to make it look as like Unitarianism as possible, and to evade the consequences which immediately suggest themselves when it is presented in the Athanasian form. They are happy, when by any new turn of language, or subtle analogy, they can make the reader acquiesce in the belief that a Trinity in Unity is not absolutely absurd. Surely, then, some strong case should be made out, of the advantages derived from the reception of this doctrine, which so much embarrasses its own defenders.

Where are these advantages to be found? Is there any thing in it which more power-

fully lays hold of the religious affections, which satisfies some want of the mind which a belief in the divine unity leaves unsatisfied? Can the Son make known something to the Father, concerning the wants of his creatures, with which the Father's omniscience was not acquainted; or move him to some act of love or mercy, to which his own boundless goodness and long suffering did not incline him? Can the Holy Spirit shed down upon us some influences, which could not have been received from the Father of our spirits, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, and who alone worketh in them both to will and to do of his own good pleasure? If each of the persons be infinite, each of them must have every attribute, every disposition, every degree of power and knowledge which the others possess; they can differ only in their relation to each other; and consequently, he who worships one infinite Deity, worships whatever is supposed to give to the three persons of the Trinity their several claims to our homage,—with this unspeakable advantage, that he keeps at a distance from every possibility of lapsing into the worship of more gods than one.

I am aware that it may be said, that I exaggerate this danger; that the doctrine of the

Trinity has long been the established faith of most countries of Christendom, and yet no symptoms have shown themselves of a return to the errors of polytheism. The fact may be so, but why? Because the Unity of God is so strongly forced upon the reflecting mind by the appearances of nature, so loudly proclaimed by Revelation, that it takes habitual possession even of those who cling most closely to the profession of a Trinitarian belief. It is ONE God whom we trace in the wonders of the starry heavens, whose wisdom we see in the pages of history, to whom the heart turns with thankfulness or resignation amidst the enjoyments or sorrows of life; it is to one God that the stream of devotional feeling and invocation always flows, when its course is not disturbed by some artificial obstacle. What makes the doctrine of the Trinity comparatively harmless is, that it is really seldom in the thoughts even of those who would feel the greatest horror at the positive denial of it. That it does not interfere more with the belief of the Unity of God, is owing, therefore, to extrinsic causes, to the salutary influence of that philosophy whose interference in matters of religion orthodoxy is so eager to forbid; to the controul of that natural reason which it denounces as carnal, and whose light it would

extinguish, while the mysteries of implicit faith are celebrated; to the authority of those repeated declarations that God is one, with which, as if in anticipation of the corruptions of religion, his Spirit has strewed so thickly the pages of holy writ*.

2. Christianity is a doctrine according to godliness, from the views which it exhibits of the moral attributes of God, especially of his acceptance of the obedience of his creatures, and his dealings with those who transgress his law.

Among the numberless errors respecting the disposition of the Deity towards his creatures, which compose the natural history of religion, none have given rise to more revolting superstitions, to darker, more bloody and more atrocious practices, than those which relate to his punishment of sin. The mixture of evil with good which the present scene exhibits, appears to have furnished one of the earliest problems which the human under-

* We may see in the Hindoo religion, the danger of corrupting the doctrine of the divine unity, even by verbal distinctions and metaphysical abstractions. Their Trinity is, among the refined classes, a sort of Sabellian personification of the attributes of the Deity; *Brama* representing the creating, *Siva* the destroying, and *Vischnu* the preserving energy of the one God, *Braam*; but among the uncultivated it is a gross polytheism; and such every scheme of a Trinity has a tendency to become, were it not for the influence of extraneous causes.

standing has applied itself to solve, as it is one of the last of which it attains a satisfactory solution. Perhaps we should esteem those nations most fortunate, who referred it to the existence of two distinct rulers of the world, a good and an evil being, since they thus preserved one object of their love and confidence. The more common effect has been, to lead men to attribute a mixture of malignity to the creator and ruler of the world, which made him view the happiness of the human race with jealousy, and delight more in afflicting than in blessing them.

If the question of the simple existence of evil in the world could thus confound the powers of the human understanding, we cannot be surprised that it should wander still further from the truth, in considering God as inflicting evil for the punishment of transgression. Some of the worst passions of our own nature enter into the feelings with which we regard those who offend us. Our indignation passes all bounds, and we seek to repay with double fury on the aggressor the injury which he has caused us; nay even in the blindness and phrensy of our rage, we sometimes vent it, not upon the criminal himself, but on some one connected with him, or even some one wholly unconnected, rather than bear the torment of

unsatisfied revenge. When beings whose resentments are so fierce and blind, transfer their own feelings to the Deity, what can be the result, but the most unworthy conceptions of the motive and the spirit of his chastisements? He will be supposed to look on offenders, not with the pain with which infinite benevolence contemplates creatures capable of happiness wandering from its path; not with the aversion with which spotless holiness regards the spread of pollution and corruption through its works; but with the wounded pride of one who is enraged that his authority should be slighted, and yet whose anger is so undistinguishing, has so little reference to the amendment of the creature who has excited it, that the suffering or death of some innocent or even irrational substitute may appease it, though the contrition and reformation of the transgressor is inadequate to this effect.

It is one of those marks of a divine origin which we discover in the Jewish system more clearly, the more we compare it with the state of the world at the time of its introduction, that it does not proceed on the supposition that moral guilt could be removed by sacrifices, though it appoints them in great number and variety for transgressions of that strict ritual under which, for very wise purposes, it

was ordained that the Jews should live. The instances alleged to the contrary, however they are to be explained, cannot invalidate this general remark: for had the Jewish law-giver meant to sanction the notion, that sacrifices could remove *presumptuous sins*, or moral guilt, it is impossible that only two ambiguous examples of it should have been found in the whole of the law. The Mosaic dispensation itself laid down moral precepts as the means by which the favour of God was to be obtained, and the prophets repeatedly and pointedly declare the inefficacy of any thing else than holiness to secure his favour, or repentance and amendment to recover it.

The doctrine of the necessity and the efficacy of repentance to forgiveness is very clearly taught in the Christian Scriptures. To bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, was the exhortation which the Baptist gave, when he announced the Messiah's approach, without the smallest intimation that any thing was to be performed by him, without which their repentance would have no avail. In the summary of Christian petition we are encouraged to hope for the forgiveness of our own sins, as we forgive those of our brethren; and the manner of this forgiveness is explained in our Lord's conversation with Peter, Luke xviii. 3.

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." The parable of the master, who, when he found his servant had nothing to pay, *freely* forgave him every thing; and that of the prodigal son, who, when he arose and returned to his father's house, was received by him with the melting tenderness of parental affection, are of themselves sufficient to show what our Lord represents as the temper of the Divine Being towards sinners: and in all his discourses, he makes good works the means of securing his favour, and repentance essential to the recovery of it. He speaks of his own death in various ways, but never once hints at its having any connexion with the disposition of God to forgive sinners, though, according to modern expounders of scripture, every other use and object of it were trivial, when compared with this. The language of the Epistles, those of Paul in particular, has been supposed to hold out a different view of the nature of the divine forgiveness; but the letters of this apostle cannot teach a doctrine at variance with his preaching, and he has himself declared what the substance of his preaching was: "Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but I declared, first to those in Damascus, and in Jerusalem, and

throughout all the country of Judæa, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn unto God, doing works worthy of repentance." Our Lord, in giving Paul his apostolical commission, had declared that he sent him "to turn the Gentiles from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among those that are sanctified by faith in me:" and lest it should be said that in the phrase *faith in me*, there may be couched a reference to the atoning virtue of his blood, a passage in the epistle to the Romans x. 8, 9, proves, that the word of faith which he preached was, "that if any man should confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in his heart that God had raised him from the dead, he should be saved." In the first epistle to the Corinthians (xv. 17) he declares that Christian faith was vain, and its professors still in their sins, "if God had not raised Christ from the dead." The allusive language in which this apostle especially speaks of the death of Christ, as a sacrifice and a ransom, and the stress which he lays upon faith, without always mentioning its connexion with works, cannot, upon any fair principles of criticism, be allowed to weigh against these clear, literal and emphatic declarations of the

nature of that faith, with which repentance was connected. At the same time, there are a multitude of passages in the epistles, which declare, that the forgiveness, for which this faith was the qualification, was the free spontaneous bounty of the Father, who sent his Son to redeem us, and gave him to die for us.

Thus stated, the gospel doctrine respecting the terms of acceptance and remission of sins well deserves the title of the doctrine according to godliness, preserving all that is awful in the justice of God, yet not driving the sinner to despair. His character as our moral governor requires that he should abhor and punish sin; his benevolence and consideration towards his imperfect creatures, that he should not keep his anger for ever; but that, when salutary chastening has softened the transgressor's heart, and the discipline of affliction subdued the turbulence of his passions, when he is desirous to seek again his father's house, though conscious that he has made himself unworthy to enter it, its gates should be open to receive him. The gospel does not condemn even the worst of sinners to despair; at the same time that, holding out no hopes of supernatural and sudden influence on the mind, it leaves in force those salutary warnings which the laws of habit suggest, concerning the

progressive ascendency and growing strength of evil dispositions. It inspires towards the Divine Being, that mixture of affection with awe, which is the proper state of the religious feelings in the present world; towards Christ, ardent gratitude for what he underwent, to make known and accomplish the plan which the love of the Father devised for our redemption; towards our sinning brethren, not the haughty spirit of pharisaic self-righteousness, but pity and affection, as for those whom, in all their wanderings, the purest and the holiest of beings has not for ever rejected, but still invites to return, and promises if they return to pardon.

If we desire to know how much the genuine Christian doctrine on this subject is "according to godliness," let us contrast it with the account given of the nature and the removal of sin, in systems of theology of human invention. That which is the most popular in this country represents the God who "knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are but dust," as consigning his creatures to everlasting torments, for even the slightest shade of sin; as choosing a small portion of them, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either, as the condition to everlasting glory; as imputing to the whole race of mankind the guilt of a sin on the part

of their ancestor which they had not the smallest share in contracting, and in consequence of this involuntary, unconscious taint, bringing them under his own wrath and the curse of the law, and making them subject to death, with all its miseries, spiritual and eternal. The same system represents the second person of the Trinity, as taking upon himself man's nature, enduring most grievous torments in his soul and most painful sufferings in his body, the divine nature preserving the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and thus discharging the debt of them that are justified, and making a full, proper and real satisfaction to his Father's justice in their behalf; the Father receiving those thus justified in consequence only of his imputing to them the obedience and satisfaction of Christ; they receiving and resting upon his righteousness by faith, and being incapable ever afterwards of falling from the state of justification*. I have here stated the Calvinistic doctrine respecting the guilt and the forgiveness of sin, in the calm and guarded language of its public formularies and manuals: even thus displayed, is it not a fearful and revolting system? But in the practical treatises written by men acknowledged

* Confession of Faith, xv. 4. iii. 5. vi. 3. xi. Larger Catechism Quest. 38.

in their day as lights of the churches, in the prayers and discourses of those preachers whom the common people hear gladly, in the devotional poetry which is sung with the highest strains of rapture, its features are shown with a yet more forbidding aspect. I dare not quote the impassioned and terrific language in which they delight to represent the fierce and implacable wrath with which the Father was inflamed, the meek submission with which the Son endured the aggravated and exquisite torment which the Father prepared for him: —I would only observe, that, dreadful as these descriptions are, they are only the fair development of the doctrine which I quoted from the recognised standard of Calvinism; they are not, as some would represent, the mere flights of the poet and the orator, but the facts couched under the more general language in which the doctrines of this theology are stated.

Where shall we begin in showing that these are not doctrines according to godliness? The heathen superstitions degraded the Creator by assimilating him to the creature; but this theology inflicts on his character a deeper degradation:—for man, fallen, corrupt as he is, is not so malignant as to exact an eternity of torment for the smallest of sins, and refuse to remit this sentence though the offender ma-

nifested the most sincere contrition for his fault; and the most earnest desire to return to the way of obedience; or for the imputed transgression of some distant ancestor. Were I compelled to think thus of the Being in whose hands my present and everlasting destiny were placed, I would indeed throw myself prostrate before the throne of his power; I would endeavour if haply I might yet move his pity by pouring out the agony of my soul under his condemning sentence; I would inflict on myself every species of bodily mortification for the chance that he might be induced to accept the extremity of my present misery, as a commutation for the pains of hell for ever:—but to call upon him as my Father who is in heaven, what would this be but the bitterness of a spirit that mocked its own wretchedness,—or the insolent irony with which a slave revenges himself on the author of his oppression,—or a libel on his memory who first taught me what are the tenderness and long-suffering of a parent's heart? What strange confusion of ideas does this system produce, when it represents sin as a want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God given as a rule to the reasonable creatures*; and yet speaks of sin, as conveyed by the order of

* Larger Catechism, Quest. 24. 26.

generation from Adam to his posterity, and therefore as existing in the new-born infant, utterly incapable of comprehending, and consequently of violating, a rule given to "the reasonable creatures!" How does it tend to confuse our ideas and to weaken the sensibility of conscience, by making men conceive of sin in the confessions of the closet and the sanctuary, as something entirely different from the intemperance, profaneness and malevolence of the conduct, and cherishing a habit of hyperbolical self-accusation in which the heart and the tongue are at variance! By holding out justification as consisting in receiving and resting upon the righteousness of Christ, without which it avails nothing, however a man grieve for and hate his sins, so as to turn from them all to God, purposing and endeavouring to walk with him in all the ways of his commandments*, it absolves those who act under a belief of it, from all care to awaken their own minds to sorrow and self-abasement for their transgressions. By declaring works done by the unregenerate (that is all those who have not been enabled by the spirit to apply Christ's sacrifice to themselves) to be sinful and incapable of pleasing God, though they be things which God commands,

* Confession of Faith, xv. 3.

and of good use to themselves and others*, it introduces an arbitrary distinction into the quality of actions, to which our natural feelings of morality are repugnant, and allows the will and motive of the agent no share in determining the merit of his deed. Taken with all its consequences, to which it must be confessed that few have courage to advance, the doctrines which I have now stated appear to me more dishonourable to God than all the inventions by which the heathens obliterated the unity and spirituality of the divine nature, more bewildering to our principles of morals than the widest aberrations of gentile philosophy in search of the chief good and the standard of virtue.

I know it will be replied, that facts disprove the charge which I have brought against the doctrines of Calvinism, and that the pulpit services and practical writings of its professors are full of exhortations to good works. I admit that this reply is to a certain extent just; the formulary of belief, the words of which I have repeatedly quoted, declares, that good works are the evidences of a true and lively faith; but most feebly infers their necessity and enforces their obligation. Why, might any one reply, on whom the necessity of good works is urged, am I bound to prac-

* Confession of Faith, xvii. 7.

tise them, when my salvation is assured without them? They are, you say, the signs and evidences of justification. But to whom are they an evidence and a sign? Not surely to God, who can need no such information respecting his own decrees: not to myself, for if I have the witness of the spirit nothing can increase my faith, and if I have it not my works are worthless: not to my fellow creatures, who may judge indeed whether my actions be "such as God commands and of good use to myself and others," but cannot penetrate into my mind to see whether it be regenerate or not. The stress which may be laid on good works by those who adopt this system, is an involuntary homage to the language of Scripture, to the common sense of mankind, to the authority of those moral principles which are implanted in the heart of man, of prior origin and more durable influence than the decrees of episcopal councils or presbyterian assemblies. He who implanted these principles within us, has endowed them with an imperishable nature and an irresistible vigour:—you may heap on them a load of human inventions, and think them for ever buried beneath the pile; but their reviving growth soon heaves the incumbent mass from its basis, and piercing through every joint and crevice crumbles it into ruin.

There is, however, a milder form of the doctrines of satisfaction and atonement, which certainly is not so hostile to godliness as that which we have just been contemplating—a form avowedly adopted by some who have signalized themselves by the defence of orthodoxy, and probably embraced by many more, not so much from any force of scriptural proof, as from that strong repulsion which the enlightened mind and the feeling heart experience against the high and rigid notions of Calvinism. According to a celebrated modern expounder of the doctrines of atonement and sacrifice, the sacrifice of Christ was never deemed by any one, who did not wish to calumniate the doctrine, as having made God placable, but as the means appointed by Divine Wisdom for the bestowment of forgiveness. The sacrifice of Christ in Scripture implies solely this,—a sacrifice wisely and graciously appointed by God, the moral governor of the world, to expiate the guilt of sin in such a manner as to avert the punishment of it from the offender; and the whole is a striking sensible representation of a punishment which the sinner was conscious that he deserved from God's justice, and a public declaration of God's holy displeasure against sin*. The pe-

* Magee's Discourses on Atonement and Sacrifice, 3d ed. i. 22, 36.

culiar line of argument which I have proposed to myself in this discourse will not allow me to enlarge on the utterly unfounded observation, That none but those who wished to calumniate the doctrine of the atonement ever represented it as having made God placable; nor on the strange expression of "expiating the guilt of sin," a personal, incommunicable thing, by the sacrifice of another not implicated in it; nor on the circuitous process, so unlike the simplicity of the divine works, by which the mercy of the Father is communicated to the sinner; nor on the inconsistency that one person of the co-equal Trinity should ordain the sufferings of another. Every one may perceive that this system is an attempt to combine as much of Calvinism as may justify the use of its phraseology, with as much of reason and humanity as may enable it to stand its ground in a scrutinizing age. With all its cumbrous apparatus, does it make one truth respecting the nature of God, or the duty of man, more clear or more impressive, than the simple statement, that God forgives their sins to those who forsake them, and sent Christ into the world to teach and die, that he might thus reclaim them from those sins, by an example which his death must crown and doctrine which his death must seal? Which of

the perfections of God does it place in a clearer light? His wisdom?—it is admitted that we cannot trace it. His love?—the disposition to bless and to forgive is avowedly the same in both cases. His justice and his purity?—need we any stronger marks of the divine displeasure against sin, than the misery which attends it here, and the retribution which he has denounced against it hereafter? Can the torments of innocence prove his abhorrence of guilt? Does it make a man more zealous for good works, or more fearful of transgressing? It is well if, with all its refined distinctions, it do not rather encourage him in the opinion, that he has no longer any concern with repentance for sins already atoned, nor interest in performing those good works which are not the *means* of his everlasting happiness. Does it teach him more humility?—the proper sources of this virtue are a consciousness of the infinite distance between God and us, of the feebleness of our virtuous purposes, the number and guilt of our backslidings, the imperfection of our best services, and absence of all claim to heavenly felicity for having performed them, when they are so inadequate to our benefactor's earthly gifts. Gospel truth, therefore, gains nothing, either in distinctness or in force, by the additions which this system makes to it,

but, on the contrary, this and every other scheme of atonement take something from its simplicity, its consistency, and its practical efficacy. Some of them may intercept more and some less of the rays of the divine benignity and mercy, or tinge what they transmit with a deeper or a fainter hue of blood; but they all spread a veil before our Heavenly Father's character; their operation resembles the optical experiment in which an image horribly distorted by the manner in which it is drawn, is imperfectly restored to the lineaments of nature by the counteracting influence of a second distortion.

But it is alleged that a system of Christianity, in which the atoning blood and merits of Christ form no part, is not "according to godliness," because it affords no ground of love towards the Redeemer. We cannot indeed say that he has rescued us from the wrath and curse of God, under which we must otherwise have perished; we dare not pluck up the foundations of the Father's throne, though it be to build an altar to the Son. We profess ourselves unable to conceive, how an infinite Being could endure the infirmities of mortality and the pains of death; or a mortal make that infinite atonement, which infinite sin is said to have demanded. These sources of love to

Jesus we must therefore confess that we have not; but we do acknowledge in him the purest benevolence that ever claimed the gratitude of a human breast, and an assemblage of all the qualities which can most powerfully attract the affectionate veneration of human beings. We acknowledge in him the best friend ever raised up by Providence to bless mankind, their deliverer from the heaviest bondage in which the human mind has ever been enthralled. Nor were the blessings which the toils of his life and the agonies of his death procured, the portion only of some race of men long since extinct, and in whose welfare we feel but a languid interest: when we pour forth our souls to the Father of our spirits, in prayers which, but for the mission of Jesus, would have been offered to some monstrous fiction of our own benighted minds, or to some senseless block of matter; when the mild light of pardoning mercy breaks upon the soul, which the consciousness of guilt and doubts of the divine forgiveness, but for the Gospel, had involved in hopeless gloom; when a strong faith in the promise of immortality which Jesus brought to light, bears up our souls above the sorrows and temptations of this life, and gives us, even on earth, some foretaste of the joys of heaven; what motive is wanting to

raise in us gratitude and love towards the Saviour, which place him above every other object in our affections, except the Great First Cause of these and of all our blessings!

3. Christianity is a doctrine according to godliness, by teaching, and confirming beyond the possibility of doubt, the doctrine of a future life of retribution.

The almost universal prevalence of a belief in a future state, although a very insufficient argument of its reality, is a very strong proof how congenial the doctrine is to the feelings, how much adapted to the wants of man, and how important it was that it should receive some confirmation from evidence superior to that which the light of nature furnishes. For the lesser evils of life, besides a multitude of other alleviations, there is always the solace of hope, a gleam of brightness amidst the darkest clouds of adversity: but death, while it inflicted the deepest wounds of all, would leave us also most completely destitute of means for alleviating their agonizing pain. Without the hope of a future life, it might not always be possible to prove, even to the coarse and vulgar sensualist, that in bartering his moral and intellectual superiority for the miserable gratification of his appetite, he was not making a reasonable exchange; and all those acts of

exalted virtue, at the sight and the remembrance of which the sympathy of men kindles into rapturous admiration, must be pronounced absurd and unreasonable sacrifices. The doctrine of a future life holds out rewards of obedience, which the purest virtue is not degraded by seeking as its object,—pains as the punishment of transgression, which the most hardened cannot slight; lightens the heaviest of our earthly afflictions, by assuring us that death has no power over virtuous friendships; and vindicates the moral providence of God, by supplying a remedy for that unequal distribution of good and evil which the present scene exhibits.

But in order that Christianity may prove itself to be "a doctrine according to godliness," by revealing the future retributory existence of man, it is absolutely necessary that an inseparable connexion be maintained between the present conduct and the future condition; and every doctrine which represents final salvation as depending on any thing else than the performance of good works, and in an inferior degree, those which make them the sign, and not, under the grace of God, the means of our salvation, want the characteristics of evangelical truth. Compare for a moment the influence of these systems, as they minister sources of consolation or motives to

duty. To him who contemplates eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ, and conformity with the law of Christ as the only means of attaining it, the connexion between belief and practice is simple and obvious. He knows that every departure from the path of duty exposes him to the displeasure of God; that, if allowed to become habitual, it may draw down upon him the severest manifestations of his just abhorrence of sin; he feels (for, however creeds may teach him to deny it, every man feels,) that he has implanted within him capacities of virtue which he is to improve and cherish, along with tendencies to evil which he is to extirpate and subdue; and as he sinks in the combat and faints in the race, or perseveres and triumphs, his conscience bears witness to the neglect or the performance of his duty, and encourages or alarms him with the prospect of the future. He trusts in the mercy of God to forgive the imperfections which adhere to his most earnest efforts to serve him; he acknowledges it to be of his free grace alone, that these services should be rewarded with the crown of immortality: but he places no dependence on any imputed righteousness, nor hopes that he may wallow in sensuality and voluptuousness, and suffer his heart to be corrupted with malevo-

lence to the last hour of life, and yet be enabled, perhaps at the moment of dissolution, to apply to himself the sacrifice which his Redeemer has offered in his behalf, and quit the world in rapture and rejoicing, when he has lived in it a burden and an outcast. Is it "a doctrine according to godliness," which, if not counteracted by some foreign influence, naturally leads to such results as those which I have just described?

How different the effects of the doctrine of a future life, as a source of consolation, under these two systems! With what calmness may the good man look on death, when he thinks on the gracious promises of God, and reviews a life devoted to his service! Of all those whose thread of life has been twined with his own, he knows that he shall lose none in the grave whose society he would wish to resume: those whom he leaves will follow him; those who have left him are only gone before him; and, as he advances on his journey, every object which reminds him how far he has proceeded from the place which he quitted in the morning, shows him also how rapidly he draws near to his evening rest, where friends and kindred are waiting to receive him. When called upon to resign into the hands of death any one of those to whom his soul has been

knit in the bonds of affection, the very bitterness of the grief which he feels at the remembrance of the qualities by which they were endeared to him becomes its own relief; and every virtue, which fills the heart with sadness and the eye with tears, is a pledge that it shall be repossessed in a happier state. But how different, did not the powerful feelings of nature triumph over the dictates of systematic theology, must often be the state of those, who have been taught to consider final salvation as bestowed without any reference to good works, and the evidence of it as consisting, not in the purity and benevolence of the life and the devotedness of the soul to God, but in the application to ourselves of the sacrifice of Christ! The friend whom you are committing to the tomb, may be one who in every relation of life has deserved the affection and esteem of all who have been connected with him; who has lived soberly, righteously and piously in the world; whose name shall go down to posterity illuminated in the record which preserves from oblivion the benefactors of mankind; and who leaves behind him a memory which "smells sweet and blossoms" in the ashes of the tomb. But what does all this avail for his safety, or for your consolation? His religious faith has been unsound; he has

refused to yield up his reason to the guidance of human authority; he sought earnestly and laboured diligently to know what was truth, but the knowledge was withheld from him; he did not receive and rest upon the righteousness of Christ; his good works, by which the wretched were comforted and the ignorant enlightened, the hungry fed and the naked clothed, are of the nature of sin; and instead of hoping to behold him in the mansions of the blessed, you must believe that his portion will be appointed with the transgressors, and that ages of ages shall roll away, and the worm not die and the fire not be quenched!

I trust that I need not pursue these parallels any further, but that you are convinced, that to produce its full effects, as a doctrine according to godliness, Christianity must be disencumbered of many things commonly believed to be of its very essence. The faith in the profession of which we appear this day united, if the zeal of an advocate has not misled me in estimating the force of the arguments which have been advanced, embraces all that is necessary to produce a life of piety, benevolence, and heavenly-mindedness. It may not contain what is peculiar in the creed of the Fathers who preceded, or the Fathers who composed, the Council of Nice; it may want

the prominent and characteristic articles of the faith of those who planted the gospel among our heathen ancestors; of the leaders of the Reformation, or the fathers of Nonconformity; but it contains those principles which, unseen by themselves, were the vital essence of their moral and religious character, and which the peculiarities of their belief tended rather to weaken than to improve. In every age, mankind have been enlightened, virtuous and happy, or ignorant, depraved and miserable, as they have known more or less of those great doctrines which are the sum and substance of your belief, and which, "invisible or dimly seen" through preceding dispensations, shine forth in the gospel with meridian splendour. The doctrines in support of which the followers of Christ have dealt around their curses on all who differed from them, which have arrayed kingdom in arms against kingdom, torn families with dissention, and sanctified the breaches of the plainest principles of morals, are not among those which you profess:—but every thing that forms the heart to the grateful love and filial awe of God—every thing that prompts to patient suffering and active labour for the service of man—every hope that can make you triumphant over the evils of the world, and exalt the soul with lively faith in

the inheritance reserved for the obedient servants of God in a better state—all these, my brethren, are preeminently yours.

What should these things teach us? To bless God that we are not as other men are, and, proud of our superior knowledge, lose all concern to approve ourselves worthy of the better light which has been vouchsafed to us? while we disclaim as a pernicious error the expectation that man can be saved by faith without works, to live as if we thought that he might be saved by knowledge without practice? Our claims to the profession of "a doctrine according to godliness" are capable, as it appears to me, of only one refutation—and that is from ourselves. If we are foremost among those who sacrifice the honour and the welfare of an immortal being at the shrine of power, sensuality, or fashion; if our zeal is lively only in the promotion of those objects which may interest our selfish passions by increasing the diffusion of our own opinions, but cold and languid where the great interests of Christianity and morals are concerned; in vain shall we profess that we maintain the entire and uncorrupted gospel; the retort is ready in the mouth of an antagonist, "Where are the fruits of your profession?" So loudly does every page of the gospel proclaim Christianity

to be practical religion, that the simplest understanding will draw the conclusion, that the creed cannot be right where the life is generally and notoriously wrong. If then we value, I do not say the increase of our own sect, but the welfare of men as involved in the overthrow of erroneous popular systems, let us not have to reproach ourselves with justifying the obstinacy with which men cling to their prejudices, by giving them reason to suspect that some essential principle of the doctrine according to godliness must be wanting, in a creed which does not make its professors zealous for good works. Make the name which characterizes your belief synonymous with that of patriot, philanthropist, Christian. When violence would wrest from your own fellow citizens, or the inhabitants of distant lands, the sacred rights of civil and religious liberty, let your voices be lifted up in that tone of firm but temperate remonstrance, which ultimately makes the most careless listen, and the most unwilling comply. Let it be among you that the friend of humanity seeks with confidence for patrons of those plans which aim to reform the moral character, and raise the degraded condition of the great mass of society; to mitigate the sufferings of the body, and dispel the gross darkness which overhangs

the mind, and keeps it in thraldom to depraved dispositions and sensual passions. Let the eye which follows you from these more public duties of the citizen to the domestic circle, find your religious principles operating in the faithfulness and affection with which you discharge the great duties of the parental, conjugal and filial relations, adorning the more essential virtues of integrity, humanity and temperance, by gentleness of manners, into which the spirit of the gospel has infused its own mildness; constant in the duties of religion, and full of reverence for the name and character of God. Truth thus professed and exemplified will have a double blessing,—first upon yourselves, whose present happiness and final salvation it will secure; and next upon those who witness your conversation, whose prejudices will be removed, whose hearts will be softened, and a conviction of the scriptural authority of your opinions be insensibly wrought in minds which argument might not have persuaded, and which invective certainly would not have influenced.

Had I not already encroached upon your time, I would gladly have addressed a few words to the two institutions which on this day celebrate their united anniversary; but I cannot conclude without adverting to and re-

joicing in the growing prosperity of the elder of these societies, in whose welfare motives of more than ordinary force engage my sympathy. Had not those by whom it was projected been fully persuaded that their cause was of God, and therefore must prosper, they might well have been dismayed by the inauspicious circumstances of its birth and infancy, when the doctrine of the Unity of God could only be avowed by braving the penalties of law, when the civil power looked with jealousy on their association, and when only here and there an individual could be found, who for the truth's sake was willing to encounter popular odium. The event has shown, that manly courage tempered by Christian prudence will overcome obstacles, remove prejudices, and conciliate regard, and in a few years change opponents into advocates, and enemies into partisans. The seed which was sown beneath so inclement a sky, that it might well have been doubted whether the binder of sheaves should ever fill his bosom with the increase, has shot up with a vigour which removes all fears for the future: the fields have long been green, and are rapidly becoming white unto the harvest. You need not, I am sure, my exhortation to recall and to honour the memory of those, who putting their hand to the plough

looked not back, but held on their way, and accomplished their work, at the risk of reputation, of usefulness, of freedom and of property. They indeed laboured, and we of the present generation have entered into their labours. O that at the same time we could enter into that zeal for the glory of God, and lively concern for the welfare of men, that unwearied activity in the diffusion of truth, and unshaken fortitude in meeting calumny and danger, which prompted them to undertake their task, and enabled them under the divine blessing to carry it on so far towards its accomplishment!

Who that beholds the progress which the doctrine of the Unity of God has made in this kingdom, since the period to which I allude, can avoid exclaiming, "It is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our eyes?" Who that reflects on the simplicity and scriptural authority of this doctrine, and on the inquiring spirit of the age, will think that we indulge the visions of a romantic imagination, in looking forward to its becoming the recognised belief of the Christian church, and, by purifying the gospel from one of its most revolting difficulties, preparing the way for its progress among those nations to whom the popular faith presents insuperable obstacles? It is not indeed for us to

know the times and the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power; his kingdom cometh not with observation; and I believe that the open defection from the doctrines of orthodoxy, extensive and increasing as it is, is far less than the secret and almost unconscious renunciation of them, especially in those countries where controversy has not roused the spirit of contradiction. The avowal and even the reception of the truth are influenced by a variety of accidental causes; it may be abandoned by those whom we thought most zealously attached to it; the dispensations of Providence may call away its most faithful advocates, ere half their term of years appear to have been completed. We possess the treasure in earthen vessels; but the treasure itself is incorruptible, incapable of waste or destruction. Like a consecrated weapon, truth descends from one generation to another, sometimes wielded by a feebler, sometimes by a more vigorous arm: but its own ethereal temper is unchanged, and its enemies shall continue to feel its penetrative power, till the last of them has resigned the contest. It is mighty, and in this conflict it must prevail; the maxim rests not only on the authority of successive ages of men, who have witnessed its partial accomplishment and transmitted it with the

seal of their experience, but on the character and perfections of God, who must design the greatest happiness of his reasonable offspring, and whose power nothing can oppose and prosper.

THE END.

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PROTESTANT NONCONFORMITY, &c.

TWO

DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED SEPTEMBER 10, 1817,

AT

THE ANNUAL DOUBLE LECTURE,

AT OLDBURY.

THE FORMER

BY JAMES SCOTT,

AND THE LATTER

BY JOHN KENRICK, M. A.

Birmingham,

PRINTED AND SOLD BY J. BELCHER AND SON;

SOLD ALSO

BY ROWLAND HUNTER, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD, LONDON.

1817.

TO THE

REVEREND MINISTERS,

AND

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE DISSENTING CHURCHES,

ASSEMBLED

AT OLDBURY, SEPTEMBER 10, 1817,

THESE DISCOURSES,

PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY THEIR OBLIGED

SERVANTS,

THE AUTHORS.

ERRATUM.

Page 17, *Note.* Mr. Turton, after his ejectment from Rowley, was the Minister of the Old Meeting, in Birmingham. The first pastor of the Congregation which assembled in Deritend (denominated then, as its successors are at present, the New Meeting Society,) was Mr. Billiton, who died early in life.

See Dr. Toulmin's Life of Bourn, p. 26.

A

SERMON,

&c. &c.

GALATIANS v. 1.

Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.*

THE Churches in Galatia, a province of Asia Minor, embraced the Christian faith under the ministry of the apostle Paul. Soon after his departure from them, some Judaizing teachers exerted their utmost endeavours to bring them into subjection to the ceremonial law;

* Some passages are now introduced into this discourse, which were omitted, for the sake of brevity, when it was delivered.

and many of the Galatians were perverted from the simplicity of the gospel. This is manifest from the letter addressed to them by the apostle, about the year of our Lord 52, in which he endeavours to convince them of their error by a train of just reasoning, and in the language of affectionate remonstrance. After contrasting, in a suitable allegory, the bondage of the ceremonial law with the more liberal spirit of the christian dispensation, he adds, in the words of our text, "Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

The Liberty which Paul asserted and defended, on this, and several other occasions, is opposed to all human impositions in matters of religion: it implies a liberty to judge and to act as reason and conscience, enlightened by divine revelation, may direct; to serve and worship God according to the rule prescribed by Christ

and his apostles. And they who attentively look into this perfect law of liberty, and conform their practice to it, will experience freedom from the dominion of prejudice and error, and from the slavery of sin; whilst every pure, every generous, every excellent principle and disposition will expand itself and flourish in their minds.

In the sequel of this discourse, I would more particularly invite your attention to the noble stand made in favour of religious liberty by the ministers who, in the year 1662, resigned their livings in the established church, because they could not conscientiously conform to requisitions which they deemed unreasonable, and inconsistent with the spirit of the gospel. There may be a peculiar propriety in referring to this event on the present occasion, as this Lecture is said to have been instituted in commemoration of it; and as the contemplation of their principles and sufferings, and the consequences

which resulted from them, may suggest several useful reflections.

I would beg leave to premise that, in selecting this subject for your present consideration, it is farthest from my intention to renew any of those hostile feelings which unhappily pervaded the minds of different classes of religious professors at the period to which I allude: I would rather indulge the hope that, by contemplating the sufferings of those confessors, gratitude will be awakened in our breasts for the more favourable circumstances in which we are placed, and that we shall hence be led to cherish a spirit of conciliation and kindness. I would also remark that the characters and conduct of the ejected ministers have been too highly extolled by some, as though they were exempt from error and imperfection; and that considerable allowances ought to be made for the prejudices of their opponents, some of whom had been treated with undue severity by

the Nonconformists themselves, at a preceding period, when they possessed considerable influence and authority in the state.

When the doctrines of the Reformation began to prevail in Britain, about the year 1530, those who separated from the church of Rome were divided into two parties*. The one preferred the episcopalian form of ecclesiastical government, together with the Liturgy, rites and ceremonies of what is now denominated the Church of England; and the other adopted a more simple mode of discipline and worship, which they apprehended to be more agreeable to the nature of the Christian dispensation, and the practice of the early ages, and which had been introduced for a considerable time into the Reformed Churches in Switzerland. In the year 1559, the reigning Monarch

* See Dr. Toulmin's Edition of Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. 1. ch. i. ii.

having enjoined the former by royal authority*, it became the established religion †; and those ‡ were discountenanced who held opinions differing from it. Hence arose the distinction between Episcopalians and Dissenters, the latter of whom were then generally known by the name of Puritans¶, on account of their attempting to introduce what they conceived to be a purer form of worship and discipline. During the succeeding reigns of James||, and Charles the first§, they were often treated with great severity. After the restoration of King Charles the second, the celebrated Act of Uniformity was passed, on Bartholomew day, in

* The Service Book, as it was then called, was introduced in the 3rd year of Edward the 6th. The Ritual of the Church of Rome was used during the reign of Queen Mary; and the book of Common Prayer was appointed to be read in the Churches on the accession of Queen Elizabeth.

† Neal, vol. i. p. 130. ‡ Ib. p. 180, &c. ¶ Ib. p. 129.

|| Ib. v. ii. p. 32, &c. § Ib. p. 203.

1662*, requiring all ministers who would continue in the Church, or be admitted to livings, to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles, and declare their assent and consent to a new edition of the book of Common Prayer. Upwards of two thousand conscientious clergymen who scrupled to comply with these requisitions, were silenced and ejected from their livings†. These excellent men formed a large and valuable accession to the general body of Dissenters; and many of them afterwards founded new and separate societies. It may be interesting and useful to detail a few particulars concerning their characters and sufferings, and the consequences which resulted from their ejectment, in reference to the history and churches of the Protestant Dissenters.

It appears from the Memoirs of the Nonconformists, written by Mr. Baxter and Dr. Calamy, and from other well

* Neal, vol. iv. p. 370, &c. † Ib. v. iv. p. 382.

authenticated accounts which have been transmitted to us*, that some of them were men of learning, and that most of them were eminent for their piety. A considerable number had been educated at the Universities during a period when peculiar care was taken to secure the diligent application and to promote the moral culture of those who were designed for the office of the christian ministry. And it would be easy to select from among them an honourable list of individuals whose works, still extant, sufficiently attest their well cultivated minds and their indefatigable labours. In their ministerial capacity they are generally represented as having been able, faithful and diligent pastors, highly esteemed, greatly beloved, and eminently useful in their respective stations. Their personal virtues are also strongly delineated in their memoirs. The sacrifices which they

* Particularly the Memoirs of them recorded in the Nonconformist's Memorial, by the Rev. S. Palmer.

made, evince that they were actuated by a principle of integrity. It highly redounds to their honour that they could not be moved from their stedfastness, or deterred from their profession, either by the smiles or the terrors of the world. The devotional spirit which they manifested, and the meekness, resignation, and patience which they displayed, amidst their various discouragements and difficulties, were noticed with respect by other professors of religion, and are largely described by those who have written the history of those times. Bishop Burnet and the illustrious Locke, have left upon record honourable testimonies to their abilities, learning, and moral worth*.

A brief detail may here be given of the inconveniences and hardships to

* See Appendix (A.)

which they were subjected, and the sufferings which they endured.

The Act of Uniformity was passed on the 8th of May, received the royal assent on the 19th of the same month, and was carried into effect on the 24th of August following: the clergy had but little time for deliberation; and many of them, who lived at a distance from the Metropolis, had no opportunity of seeing the new edition of the book of Common Prayer, to which they were required to give their assent, as it was published only on the 6th of August*. Some of them, when they resigned their livings, gave up very considerable emoluments; and others had made no provision for the future subsistence of themselves and their families. They were not only required to abstain from the exercise of their ministerial functions, but were also restricted from engaging in the in-

* Neal, vol. iv. pp. 371—376.

struction of Youth. In the year 1664 the Conventicle Act* passed, the pressure of which was severely felt by the laity, and which subjected any person above sixteen years of age, present at any meeting for any religious exercise not according to the Church of England, where there were five or more persons besides the household, to fines, imprisonment, or banishment†. Magistrates were empowered to dissolve such meetings, and to take into custody such of their number as they might think fit; and severe penalties were levied upon those at whose houses such assemblies were held. And during the following year the nonconforming ministers were har-

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* Neal, p. 406.

† It enacted that for the first offence the person convicted should suffer three months imprisonment, or pay five pounds; for the second, six months, or ten pounds; and for the third, be banished for seven years, or pay one hundred pounds. And in case of return, or escape, that he should suffer death, without benefit of Clergy.

rassed by the Oxford Act*, which restrained them from coming within five miles of any city, town corporate, or borough, or any place where they had exercised their ministry, unless in passing along the road. Some additional clauses† were also added to the Conventicle Act, in 1670, which rendered it still more severe and oppressive. In consequence of these various edicts, great numbers of the Nonconformists suffered extreme hardships in being fined, plundered, driven from their families, and imprisoned. During the succeeding reign of James the second, the penal laws were still enforced with the utmost rigour. And these severities continued to be exercised in a greater or less degree until the year 1688, when a more just and liberal system was adopted, under the auspicious and glorious reign of King William the third.

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* Neal, vol. iv. p. 416. † Ib. pp. 444, 445.

Let us next advert to the consequences which resulted from the Act of Uniformity, and other ordinances connected with it. Many of these worthies bade adieu to their beloved homes, with aching hearts, and went forth not knowing the things that should befal them*:

> "The world was all before them, where to choose
> Their place of rest, and Providence their guide."

Numbers of them were reduced to great straits and difficulties; but that gracious Being on whose friendship they reposed, provided in various ways for their support†, and rendered their sufferings instrumental in promoting the furtherance of the gospel, and in subserving the cause of civil and religious liberty.

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* See Appendix (B.)

† See Nonconformist's Memorial, and Neal's History, vol. iv. ch. vi. vii. viii.

Some of them found a safe and hospitable asylum amongst their brethren in Switzerland. Others discovered peaceful retreats, and occupied extensive spheres of usefulness, in the provinces of North America, where new churches were founded, and continued to flourish and increase under their ministry. Some engaged with success in the profession of medicine, or in commercial pursuits, or in the employments of husbandry. Others experienced much kindness from those who approved of their principles, and from those who pitied their sufferings; while some persons of rank and fortune became their patrons, and liberally contributed to their support. Most of them conceived it to be their duty to continue their ministerial labours, as circumstances would permit, and to do good in this way, as they had ability and opportunity; and their exertions, through the blessing of Heaven, were often crowned with wonderful success. Many of their hearers still adhered to

them. They were convinced of the rectitude of their motives and the justice of their cause. They had been edified by their examples and benefited by their counsels; and they were willing to partake of their sufferings, to share with them in evil as well as in good report, to aid and countenance them as much as possible, that they might obtain the approbation of God, and of their own consciences, and at the same time manifest their esteem and affection for their beloved pastors. The memorable protest which they entered against human impositions in matters of religion, and in favour of the rights of conscience and religious liberty, is a fact of great importance in the history of the Church; and it may well consecrate their names to the veneration of posterity. There is no instance upon record of an equal number of persons of ability and worth voluntarily resigning their emoluments for the sake of a good conscience, and bearing such a decided and unanimous

testimony to the truth and importance of religion. It is acknowledged, indeed, that a diversity of opinion prevailed amongst them concerning many controverted points in theology: but they all agreed in maintaining inviolate the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Their conduct tended to illustrate the grand Protestant Principles of the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a rule of faith, worship, and practice, the authority of Christ as the sole head and lawgiver of his church, and the unalienable right of private judgment. Their controversial writings rendered the principles of civil and religious liberty more generally known, caused them to be better understood, and very materially contributed to the public reoognition of these principles in more enlightened times. And as Protestant Dissenters, we ourselves, under Providence, are much indebted to them for the privileges which we now enjoy; and we may consider them, and their

immediate descendants and successors, as bearing a yet more interesting relation to us in the character of the founders of many of our Churches*, and of other valuable institutions.

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* May the writer be excused if he here adds a few cursory remarks concerning the origin of those churches whose ministers usually assemble at the annual Lectures of Dudley and Oldbury?—The Rev. William Turton, ejected from Rowley Regis, was thirty years pastor of the Dissenting Congregation which assembled at Deritend, near Birmingham, where several ministers resided who were silenced by the Act of Uniformity. Mr. Turton often officiated at Oldbury, of which congregation his near relations were distinguished patrons. He died in 1716. In the City of Coventry, John Bryan, D. D. ejected from Trinity, and Obadiah Grew, D. D. from Saint Michael's Church, continued afterwards to preach, as they had opportunity, to those who valued their principles and services. It also appears that a small society of Congregationalists previously existed there, under the pastoral care of the Rev. S. Bassnett. The congregation at Kingswood, near Birmingham, appears to have been of later origin; it is certain however that there was a Dissenting Chapel there in 1715. The Chapel at Evesham was built in 1740, at the opening of which the Rev. P. Cardale delivered the discourses, afterwards printed, entitled the Gospel Sanctuary. The names of twelve of the ejected ministers might be enumerated who resided in the

In tracing back the history of the Annual Double Lectures of Dudley and

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town, or within four miles, of Stourbridge, and who preached Lectures at different places, as opportunities occurred, during a period of thirty-six years. Their various services prepared the way for the formation of the original Dissenting churches of Stourbridge in 1698, and Cradley in 1704. Messrs. Fincher, H. Oasland, Paston, and others, formed, and for many years supplied a congregation near Gornal; until a commodious Chapel was provided for its accommodation in Dudley, in 1702; where a Society had been previously formed about the year 1684, of which Mr. William Willetts was the first minister, who died in 1700. The Rev. Joseph Ecclesshal, after his ejection from Sedgley, frequently officiated at Coseley, where the first Dissenting Chapel was erected in 1717. The Rev. J. Stubbs was minister at Wolverhampton in 1701, who was probably the son of one of the Bartholomew divines of that name who had preached at Horsley in Gloucestershire. At the commencement of the eighteenth century, Mr. J. Godley was pastor of the society at Walsall, assisted by Mr. John Reynolds, who was the author of many excellent pieces, and whose father was ejected from Wolverhampton. The Rev. J. Spilsbury, who had been minister of the parish church of Bromsgrove, still continued to officiate amongst his friends, who erected a chapel in 1693. The celebrated Mr. Baxter was succeeded at Kidderminster by Mr. Baldwin, who had been ejected from Chaddesley, and who died in 1693. And

Oldbury, we are induced to believe that the former owes its origin to the ejected ministers resident in the neighbourhood, and that the latter was instituted by their immediate successors; though we cannot ascertain the exact dates of their commencement*. We learn from the testimony of several aged and worthy individuals, who derived their information from highly respectable ancestors once resident near the place, that some of the ejected ministers, in conjunction with Mr. Willetts, preached an annual Lecture on Whit-Tuesday, at the house of Mr. Joseph Smith, near Gornal, until the removal of the Society to the Meeting House in Dudley, in

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the Rev. Henry Oasland, ejected from Bewdley chapel, was the first Dissenting minister in that town, and continued to officiate until the year 1703, when he died at the advanced age of eighty.

Nonconformist's Memorial. M. S. Records.

* Records of the Congregations of Stourbridge and Cradley, denominated Presbyterian.

the year 1702. It appears that Mr. John Reynolds, who was ordained* at Oldbury Chapel, with three other ministers, in the year 1699, frequently officiated at the Lecture at Dudley, early in the eighteenth century: and the following testimony of his biographer, taken from the third edition of his memoirs, printed in 1735, is interesting and appropriate†, "At Dudley, in Worcestershire, they have a very crowded Lecture in Whitsun week. Neighbouring congregations, with that which statedly belongs to the place, supply a numerous auditory. Mr. Reynolds was one of the preachers at this lecture for many years successively."

It has been already intimated that there is reason to conclude that this Lecture was instituted in commemoration of the principles and conduct of the excellent persons who have occupied

* Memoirs of Mr. Reynolds, p. 25. † Ib. p. 128.

our attention. It is admitted however that of its origin another account has been given, which rests upon respectable authority*: "That the Family of Turton, which had resided at the Brades since the year 1688, being in imminent danger, in consequence of the sudden fall of a part of the mansion which they inhabited, to express their gratitude for their deliverance, invited the ministers in the neighbourhood to assist them in keeping a day of Thanksgiving, who from that time annually assembled in the Dissenting chapel." But the testimony of the Rev. Job Orton is of considerable weight in favour of the former opinion. In a letter addressed to the Rev. Samuel Palmer, of Hackney†, and dated June 27th, 1775, referring to the ejected Ministers, he observes, "Oldbury Lecture in this neighbourhood used to

* Information communicated by the late Rev. William Procter.

† See Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers.

be preached in the week in which the 24th of August fell, and was instituted on purpose to commemorate these excellent men. I once preached there, and considered their case. But on account of the harvest it was put off to the middle of September, which I think was wrong, as the object of the Lecture was in time forgotten, &c." From the testimony now adduced, we may with certainty conclude that the Lectures of Dudley and Oldbury are of long standing; and it is probable that they are at least as ancient as any similar institution in the kingdom conducted by Protestant Dissenters.

Your time will permit me only to add a few practical reflections.

1st. We have great cause for thankfulness for the religious liberty which we ourselves enjoy. Soon after the happy Accession of King William, the

Toleration Act was passed*, which exempted the general body of the Nonconformists from the penalties of the most obnoxious laws. Some attempts were made in the latter end of Queen Anne's reign, to abridge the liberties of the Dissenters, by the introduction first of the Occasional Conformity Bill, which prohibited any person in office under Government from entering into a Meeting House, and then of the Schism Bill, which had actually obtained the royal assent, and which suffered no Dissenters to educate their own children, but required them to be placed in the hands of Conformists, and forbade all Tutors and School-masters being present at any Dissenting place of worship†. These attempts however were frustrated by the death of the Queen, on the day on which this Act was to have taken

* Neal, vol. v. p. 84. Appendix No. 13.

† Ib. vol. v. p. 96, 97: and Palmer's Protestant Dissenters' Catechism, p. 25; fifteenth Edition.

place, August 1st, 1714, when the Elector of Brunswick, (George the first) a firm friend to civil and religious liberty, was proclaimed King of Great Britain. In the fifth year of his reign he procured a repeal of the Schism Bill. In his illustrious family the sceptre has ever since continued; and under their equitable government our legal rights have been preserved. During the present reign our religious liberty has been extended. The Toleration Act provided no relief for Dissenting Schoolmasters: but in the year 1799, without any application on their behalf, its benefits were extended to them*. In 1811†, renewed testimonies were given

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* Palmer's Catechism, p. 27.

† A Bill was introduced into the House of Peers, by the Right Hon. Lord Viscount Sidmouth, May 9th, 1811, entitled, an Act to explain and render more effectual certain Acts of the first year of the reign of King William and Queen Mary, and of the 19th of his present Majesty, so far as the same relate to Protestant Dissenting Ministers. But

in favour of religious freedom. On the 14th of July, 1813, some remaining statutes of a persecuting nature, which affected Unitarian Christians, were repealed by a voluntary Act of the Legislature. And I trust that we may infer from the liberality which we have already experienced, that every statute will be removed which has any tendency to infringe upon religious liberty. *We* enjoy advantages for the exercise of religion far superior to those which our ancestors possessed. Let us be devoutly thankful to God for them, nor forget what we owe to those by whose instrumentality they have been conveyed to us.

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this Bill excited a general alarm among the friends of liberty as a virtual repeal of the toleration system. Petitions were presented against it by Dissenters of all denominations from every part of the kingdom, in consequence of which it was prevented from going into a Committee. Even the Ministry advised that it should be withdrawn. And the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed his aversion to press a measure which the Dissenters deemed inimical to their liberties.

Palmer's Catechism, p. 24.

2nd. Our religious liberty should be highly valued, and diligently improved.

Consider at how dear a rate it has been purchased and secured. Think on the calamities which others have endured in its defence and support, whilst ye enjoy, in ease and comfort the fruits of their labours and sufferings. To renew and perpetuate the feelings of gratitude, let us often compare our situation with theirs, and render ourselves familiar with their history and character. May I be permitted to suggest, my much respected brethren in the ministry, that we also may derive great advantage from perusing the memoirs of these excellent men; and that their integrity, fidelity, and zeal, their unwearied endeavours in promoting the cause of religion, their meekness, self-denial, fortitude, and superiority to the world, render them examples worthy of our imitation? Ye who attend upon our ministrations may also derive great

benefit from contemplating the characters of your ancestors. If *they* frequently met together to engage in religious ordinances, at the hazard of their liberty and temporal possessions, surely *ye* are utterly without excuse, and obnoxious to the most awful doom, if trivial or worldly considerations influence you to forsake the house and the worship, of your God! Rather, let it be your study and endeavour to emulate their zeal and piety; and may the virtues by which they were distinguished, adorn your characters, and recommend your principles and profession! "Herein," said Jesus*, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples:" And† "to whom much is given, of them much will be required."

Finally, Let us stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

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* John, xv. 8. † Luke xii. 48.

We conceive that our principles as Christians, as Protestants, and as Protestant Dissenters, are sacred and important. Let us then "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering;" "speaking the truth in love*," and exercising charity and uniform kindness to those whose religious sentiments may differ from our own. Let not any difficulties or discouragements, let not the amusements, the cares, or the temptations of life, abate the vigour of our principles, or lessen their influence upon our conduct. And let us not "count even life itself dear unto us, so that we may finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.†"

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* Hebrews, x. 23. Ephesians, iv. 15. † Acts, xx. 24.

APPENDIX.

A.

"Many of them were distinguished by their abilities and their zeal."

Burnet's Hist. of his Own Time, vol. 1, p. 315, 12mo. ed.

"Bartholomew-Day was fatal to our Church and Religion, by throwing out a very great number of worthy, learned, pious, and orthodox Divines."

Locke's Posthumous Works, fol. 2nd ed. p. 20.

B.

THE following Extracts from a "Compleat Collection of Farewell Sermons," preached by the Ejected Ministers, London, 1663, 4to. will show the spirit with which these excellent men took leave of their beloved flocks.

"I know you expect I should say something as to my nonconformity. I shall only say thus much:—It is neither

fancy, faction nor humour that makes me not to comply, but merely for fear of offending God. And if, after the best means used for my illumination, as prayer to God, discourse, study, I am not able to be satisfied concerning the lawfulness of what is required; if it be my unhappiness to be in error, surely *men* will have no reason to be angry with me in this world, and I hope *God* will pardon me in the next."

Dr. William Bates: p. 143.

"And truly, my dearly beloved in the Lord, this is my great work now, when I am dying to you as to my public preaching. My beloved, I am very sensible that it is a very sad and solemn thing for a Minister to be rent from a people that he loves as his own soul, that he hath laboured among; to bid adieu to those solemn meetings, wherein I have preached to you, wherein we have mingled our sighs and our tears before the Lord, wherein we have rejoiced and sat down before the Lord at his table. Now to think that I must minister with you and for you no more in these ordinances, methinks it is a heart-breaking consideration, to think that I am now dying in this congregation, to think that I am now dying whilst I am preaching. But this is my comfort under these sad thoughts, that I can *commit you to God and to the word of his grace;* to one that is *able to keep you and to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified.* Like a dying father, I can commend you to the care of such a Friend, infinitely able to supply all that I could not do for you.

And though I take this solemn leave of you, as to this public exercise, yet if, the Lord shall open the door, and take off those bands of death that the law hath laid upon my ministry, in regard of Conscience, who cannot conform, for which our public ministry is suspended, I shall chearfully and willingly return to you in this place."

Mr. Bull: p. 409.

"I shall only add this, my friends, that though my lips be sealed up that I may not speak from God to you, yet I shall not cease to speak to God for you, as ever I have done. And though I cannot have you in my eye, yet I shall lodge you in my heart; and asking nothing of you but your prayers, shall hope to meet you daily at the Throne of Grace, and that at last, we may enjoy one another in heaven."

Mr. Lamb: p. 446.

DUDLEY DOUBLE LECTURE.

Date	Preachers	Preachers	Conductors of the Devotional Service
1753	Rev. G. Flower, of Stourbridge	J. Thompson, of Bromsgrove	
1758	W. Hawkes, Birmingham	S. Clemens, Warwick	
1769	S. Clark, Birmingham	-- Sutton, Nottingham	
1770	--- Llewyllin, Walsall	R. Gentleman, Kidderminster	
1773	S. Addington, Market Harboro'	J. Harries, London	
1776	W. Warburton, Northampton		
1777	J. Evans, Alcester	J. Jones, Bewdley	
1778	S. Lucas, Walsall	S. Clemens, Warwick	
1779	N. Hill, London	J. Cole, Wolverhampton	
1780	M. Bradshaw, Brentford	Dr. Priestley, Birmingham	
1781	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	H. Worthington, Leicester	
1782	T. Belsham, Worcester	Jos. Evans, Sheffield	
1783	R. Amner, Coseley	J. Gummer, Worcester	
1784	W. Procter, Oldbury	P. Emans, Coventry	
1785	R. Gentleman, Kidderminster	W. Wells, Bromsgrove	
1786	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	R. Scholefield, Birmingham	
1787	R. Gentleman, Kidderminster	J. Hobson, Kingswood	
1788	S. Griffiths, Wolverhampton	W. Severn, Blackley	Dr. Priestley
1789	T. E. Beasley, Walsall	J. Coates, Birmingham	S Griffiths
1790	T. Kingsbury, Warwick	J. Kings, Cirencester	W. Wells
1791	James Scott, Cradley	Jer Dethwick, Bardon	R. Scholefield
1792	W. Field, Warwick	J. Holt, West-Bromwich	James Scott
1793	T. Moore, Walsall	John Edwards, Birmingham	W. Field
1794	J. Tingcombe, Kingswood	D. Jones, Birmingham	W. Procter
1795	T. Bowen, Walsall	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	S. Griffiths
1796	S. Griffiths, Wolverhampton	R. Scholefield, Birmingham	T. Bowen
1797	W. Blake, Kidderminster	Jos. Evans, Sheffield	W. Severn
1798	H. Jenkins, Stourbridge	W. Severn, Kidderminster	W. Blake
1799	James Scott, Cradley	Dr. Barnes, Manchester	W. Allard
1800	W. Allard, Coseley	J. Coates, Birmingham	James Scott
1801	W. T. Procter, Burton	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	J. Coates
1802	D. Mercer, Bilston	J. Maurice, West-Bromwich	W. T. Procter
1803	John Kentish, Birmingham	R. Kell, Birmingham	D. Mercer
1804	John Corrie, Birmingham	N. Shattock, Wolverhampton	Dr. Toulmin
1805	H. Jenkins, Stourbridge	Dr. Toulmin, Birmingham	N. Shattock
1806	T. Howe, Bridport	T. Bowen, Walsall	Dr. Toulmin
1807	Dr. Barnes, Manchester	P. Emans, Coventry	H. Jenkins
1808	J. Bull, Mansfield	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	P. Emans
1809	John Kentish, Birmingham	R Fry, Coseley	James Scott
1810	S. Griffiths, Oldbury	James Scott, Cradley	R. Fry
1811	Rees Lloyd, Kingswood	J. Rowe, Bristol	James Scott
1812	W. Allard, Bury	J. Bealey, Cockey Moor	Dr. Toulmin
1813	John Corrie, Handsworth	Dr. Toulmin, Birmingham	J Kentish
1814	T. Davis, Coventry	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	Dr. Toulmin
1815	J. Small, Coseley	R. Kell, Birmingham	B. Carpenter
1816	James Yates, Liverpool	James Scott, Cradley	R. Kell
1817	John Kentish, Birmingham	J. H. Bransby, Dudley	James Scott

OLDBURY DOUBLE LECTURE.

Date	Preachers	Preachers	Conductors of the Devotional Service
1764	Rev. --- Harrop	N. Porteous, of Nuneaton	Josiah Corrie
1769	--- Dalton, Coventry	H. Worthington, Leicester	
1770	--- Jackson, Coventry	G. Lewis, Kingswood	
1776	S. Fawcett, Jun. Kidderminster	R. Amner, Coseley	
1777	--- Evans, Alcester	W. Warburton, Northampton	
1778	--- Jones, Bewdley	H. Worthington, Jun. London	
1779	J. Kinge	--- Jackson, Coventry	
1780	--- Jeffries, Walsall	J. Palmer, Birmingham	
1781	J. Humphries, West-Bromwich	--- Phillips	
1782	H. Crabb, Cirencester	Timothy Priestley, London	
1783	W. D Wood, Dudley	W. Cole, Wolverhampton	
1784	S. Griffiths, Wolverhampton	Dr. Priestley, Birmingham	
1785	R. Gentleman, Kidderminster	P. Emans, Coventry	
1786	W. Wells, Bromsgrove	N. Hill, London	
1787	J. Hobson, Kingswood	Jos. Evans, Sheffield	
1788	J. Coates, Birmingham	J. Gummer, Worcester	
1789	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	R. Scholefield, Birmingham	
1790	W. Allard, Coseley	S. Griffiths, Wolverhampton	
1791	James Scott, Cradley	--- Lucas	G. Hodgkins
1792	T. Moore, Walsall	R. Amner, Coseley	James Scott
1793	--- Jones, Bewdley	G. Lewis, London	R. Amner
1794	J. Tingcombe	John Edwards, Birmingham	S. Griffiths
1795	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	W. D. Wood, Dudley	James Scott
1796	H. Jenkins, Stourbridge	J. Coates, Birmingham	B. Carpenter
1797	S. Griffiths, Wolverhampton	J. Brewer, Birmingham	J. Jevans
1798	T. Bowen, Walsall	J. Maurice, West-Bromwich	W. Allard
1799	W. Allard, Coseley	R. Scholefield, Birmingham	D. Mercer
1800	T. Moore, Kingswood	D. Mercer, Bilston	W. Allard
1801	James Scott, Cradley	R. Kell, Birmingham	D. Mercer
1802	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	W. D. Wood, Dudley	R. Kell
1803	H. Jenkins, Stourbridge	John Kentish, Birmingham	James Scott
1804	James Scott, Cradley	S. Palmer, Hackney	J. Kentish
1805	P. Emans, Coventry	N. Shattock, Wolverhampton	James Scott
1806	John Corrie, Birmingham	Dr. Toulmin, Birmingham	J. H. Bransby
1807	J. H. Bransby, Dudley	R. Kell, Birmingham	Dr. Toulmin
1808	T. Moore, Kingswood	R Fry, Coseley	R. Kell
1809	J. Lane, Kidderminster	P. Emans, Coventry	R. Fry
1810	John Kentish, Birmingham	E. Butcher, Sidmouth	J. H. Bransby
1811	J. Kenrick, York	B. Carpenter, Stourbridge	J. Kentish
1812	Rees Lloyd, Kingswood	T. Davis, Coventry	J. H. Bransby
1813	J. Small, Coseley	J. H. Bransby, Dudley	T. Davis
1814	J. Steward, Wolverhampton	J. Guy, Birmingham	J. H. Bransby
1815	W. Turner, Jun. York	R. Fry, Kidderminster	J. Guy
1816	John Corrie, Handsworth	T. Bowen, Walsall	J. Kentish
1817	J. Kenrick, York	James Scott, Cradley	J. H. Bransby

SERMONS,

PREACHED

AT THE LECTURES OF DUDLEY AND OLDBURY,

AND

AFTERWARDS PRINTED.

1. Elisha's cry after Elijah's God, 2 Kings, ii. 14. preached at Dudley, by the Rev. Edward Brodhurst, and printed in a volume of Posthumous Sermons. 1733.

2. The true way of striving for the faith of the Gospel, Phil. i. 27, 28, preached at Dudley, by the Rev. S. Bourn, of Birmingham. 1738.

3. Difference of Sentiment, no objection to the exercise of mutual Love, John xv. 12. preached at Dudley, by the Rev. B. Carpenter. 1789.

4. Habitual Devotion, Ps. x. 4. preached at Dudley, by the Rev. Dr. Priestley. 1782.

5. Reflections on the exercise of private judgment in matters of Religion, Matt. xxiv. 12. preached at Dudley, by the Rev. J. Corrie. 1804.

6. Bartholomew Day commemorated, Phil. i. 12. by the Rev. S. Palmer, preached at Oldbury, September 11th, 1804, and printed on another occasion. 1807.

7. The reciprocal duties of Ministers and People illustrated and enforced, 1 Cor. iv. 1. preached at Dudley, by Joshua Toulmin, D. D. June 8th, 1813.

The most ancient Dissenting Congregation in this part of the Kingdom, is the Baptist Society at Netherton, which appears from a record of that church to have been formed in 1654. From that year to 1697, 158 persons were admitted in it by adult Baptism.

THE LOVE OF TRUTH,

A BRANCH OF THE DUTY OF BENEVOLENCE.

By John Kenrick

A

SERMON,

&c. &c.

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1. COR. xiii. part of the 3rd. verse.

"*Though I give my body to be burned and have not charity it profiteth me nothing.*"

IN the chapter which precedes that from which my text is taken, the Apostle has been giving counsel to the Corinthians respecting the use of those miraculous powers with which the first converts to Christianity were endowed. Imagining that some of these gifts were more honourable to the possessors than others, they had become mutually jealous; and the apostle has been endeavouring to repress this spirit, by showing them, that as the different members of the body, though some are less honour-

able than others, are all alike subservient to the health and well being of the whole; so the different miraculous gifts which Christ had bestowed upon his church were all alike designed and calculated to promote the increase of Christianity, and consequently that no one ought to feel pride or discontent on account of the peculiar nature of his own gift. But it did not satisfy the apostle to have shown that the diversity of endowments was no reasonable cause of jealousy: he saw that this feeling never would have existed had they remembered that these gifts had been bestowed not to gratify their selfish vanity, in making a display of them, but to attest the divine origin of Christianity, by proving to the world that the power of God was with those who possessed it. Having therefore finished his argument respecting the equality of honour which miraculous powers conferred, he proceeds to correct that selfish disposition which had given birth to their

mutual jealousies; and this he does by means of that beautiful and comprehensive description of charity, or Christian benevolence, which is contained in the 13th chapter—"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing: and though I bestow my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." As if he had said, "The highest of those endowments which have excited such jealousies amongst you, confers no honour, gives no acceptance with God, unless to those who receive and employ them as a trust from him for the promotion of their fellow creatures' welfare. Even those splendid acts of munificence which, as they cost more self denial

might be thought free from the suspicion of selfishness, are of no merit in his eyes, unless they spring from a genuine affection for those on whom your bounty is bestowed. Of such vital importance indeed is the spirit of benevolence, that should your zeal in the cause of truth even lead you to suffer martyrdom in its defence, hope not that this costly sacrifice will be accepted, unless you have been prompted to it by a regard to the good of mankind, as involved in the triumph of the gospel, whose truth you thus attest."

I propose, in enlarging on these words of the Apostle, to show, in the first place, the propriety of considering the love of truth, as he here represents it, as a branch of the duty of benevolence, and next to suggest some rules, readily deducible from this view of the origin of a love of truth, for judging of its strength and purity, by the actions and expressions in which it manifests itself.

I. To prove that every one who loves his fellow creatures must love the truth, as one of the means of their happiness, it is only necessary to allege what the history of nations and the comparison of individuals teaches us, of the influence of truth on the character and well-being of man. Even a heathen moralist* professed that he sought the truth, which never injured any one: but it has much more than this negative merit; for every addition to human knowledge, that is, every new acquisition of truth, is an increase of our means of happiness; every destruction of error is a deliverance from an enemy which, as far as its power extended, kept us in bondage and in misery. No one probably has ever seriously doubted, though the love of paradox may have led some to deny, that mankind are the better for all the accessions which every new age of the

* Ἀλήθειαν ζητῶ, ὑφ' ἧς οὐδείς πώποτε ἐβλάβη.

MARCUS ANTONINUS.

world brings to our knowledge, of the objects, the properties and the laws of nature, that is to philosophical and scientific truth. The increase of knowledge is here evidently the increase of our power—our power of applying to our own use the stores which the author of nature has laid up in it for our benefit, and of averting from ourselves those inconveniencies to which he has wisely and benevolently made us subject, in order that the effort to avoid them may lead us to exert and cultivate our faculties. It is not, however, of truth in general but of religious truth that it is my present object to show, that he who loves his brethren must love it for its influence on their happiness. Can any one doubt that if it so much concerns us to have just ideas of those laws of nature which are nothing more than the rules which the wisdom of God has prescribed for the exercise of his power, it much more concerns us that we conceive justly of Him in whom these ener-

gies reside, in whom we live and move and have our being, who made us what we are, and alone upholds us in existence? If we are so anxious to know thoroughly the properties of every one of those material bodies which surround us, and may have some trifling influence upon our happiness in the short time during which this world of matter is our dwelling place, can we think it a point of no moment, whether we have formed just conceptions of that infinite and eternal Spirit in whose power we shall continue, in whose mercy and favour we must place our hope of happiness, when all that now gratifies or offends our senses shall have returned to the state whence his word called it forth? If it be so important to us to form a right judgment of the character of our fellow creatures, in order to know what to imitate, and what to shun, in their conduct, to judge of the motives by which they are guided, and the behaviour which they are likely to pursue

towards us, is it possible that it should be indifferent to our happiness how we conceive of Him, whose approbation it is the first object of our lives to gain, whose character must be the anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast, when every earthly support is taken away, in the knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, before whose face the spirits of the just made perfect are to dwell, deriving the blessedness of eternity from communion with him and contemplation of his perfections? Our religious opinions are the judgments which we form of the character, will and dispensations of God, the nature which he has given to his creatures, his conduct towards them and his designs concerning them; and if any one will maintain that it matters not whether we conceive of him as a being stern, vindictive and capricious, or one whose name and nature is love, he may also maintain that the most salutary food and the deadliest poison can be received with equal safety

and pleasure into the animal system. There is nothing which calls forth the good affections of the heart more powerfully than true religion, nothing which more expands the affections and exalts the intellectual powers; but, as the corruption of the best things produces the worst, nothing sinks the human mind into a deeper abyss of degradation, filling the heart with despondency, terror and malignity, than false religion. Whether its errors arise from the imperfection of the light of nature, or from the corruption of revealed religion, it changes that which should be the joy, the consolation and the hope of man, into the source of gloom, of wretchedness and despair.

If such be the value of religious truth, and the mischief of religious error, there needs little argument to show that to labour for the diffusion of what we deem the truth is one of the first duties of benevolence. He who is perfectly in-

different whether truth or error prevail in the world, who looks on while his fellow creatures are struggling with the evils arising from ignorance of God and of their duty, without aiding in their deliverance, as much neglects his obligations, as much violates the gospel law of love, as he who sees his brother stript and wounded but passes by on the other side, or who says to the hungry and to the naked, Depart, without giving them those things that are needful for the body. As to those who directly countenance and propagate error, believing it to be such, theirs is a blacker crime and a heavier condemnation: they not only withhold the bread of life from those who are perishing for want of it, but give them a serpent in its stead.

I know that it may be said that I have taken extreme cases, that there are many religious truths and errors capable of producing all the effects ascribed to them, but that many also of the one class are

harmless, and of the other, useless. This language wears too much the appearance of a preparative for indifference, under the guise of moderation; and, besides, proceeds from the want of observing the indirect benefits of truth. Truths which seem of very little consequence, may be really important, and well worth contending for, as steps by which others must be attained. The searcher after truth, to borrow an illustration from Milton*, is like the fabled Egyptian goddess, who roamed through the world, seeking the dispersed

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"* Truth, indeed, once came into the world with her divine Master, and was a perfect shape, glorious to look upon; but when he ascended, and his apostles after him were laid asleep, there strait arose a wicked race of deceivers, who, as the story goes of the Egyptian Typhon with his conspirators, how they dealt with the god Osiris, took the virgin Truth, hewed her lovely form into a thousand pieces and scattered them to the four winds. From that time ever since, the friends of Truth, such as durst appear, imitating the careful search that Isis made for the mangled body of Osiris, went up and down gathering up limb by limb, as they

members of her consort's body; and if he hopes that the heavenly form should ever recover its primitive unity and beauty, he must reverently gather up the smallest portion, though it may not be of a vital part, and though he knows not, in its mutilated state, what place or office it may hold, when all shall be re-united. The particle of Gold, which sparkles in a heap of baser matter, may guide the observer to the hidden vein from which it came, and reward him by the discovery of countless wealth; and how can we presume to say, that the truths which we slight as trivial, may not be necessary links in a chain which draws on others of the greatest magnitude and value? Besides, the great

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could find them. We have not yet found them all, Lords and Commons, nor shall do, till her master's second coming: he shall bring together every joint and member, and mould them into an immortal feature of loveliness and perfection."

Areopagitica, a Speech for the Liberty of unlicensed Printing. Prose Works, vol. i. p. 156. Folio.

variety in the habits and associations of different minds, makes it impossible that any one should know a truth to have no practical influence, because it has none on himself. All that we see of the tendency of truth is good, all that of error, bad: we may therefore fairly presume that the effect of each remains the same, where it is not perceptible; and we are justified in loving truth and opposing error, with the energy and ardour of a ruling passion, though we cannot demonstrate in each individual case that the effect of each is such as, upon general principles, we have concluded them to be.

To contend, therefore, for what we believe to be the true faith in religion, to contend for it earnestly, is a branch of Christian benevolence. But are we hence to conclude that all the zeal for religious opinion which we witness in the world springs from charity to mankind? Is it a love to their fellow-crea-

tures which has prompted men to enforce their creed at the point of the sword, to immure the conscientious dissident in the dungeon or bind him to the stake, to add an anathema of everlasting perdition to the extremity of bodily torment, in order that their united terror might extort a hypocritical assent? Is it a spirit of love which in these latter days, when the instruments of death and torture have been wrested from the hands of bigotry, still leads the party which possesses power, to attempt to produce uniformity of opinion by civil disqualifications, and even those who labour under this common proscription to deny the Christian name and the offices of Christian fellowship, if not the common courtesies of life, to all beyond the circle of their own communion? Unless the same fountain can send forth both sweet and bitter waters, persecution and intolerance must have a very different origin from that love of truth which the gospel sanctions. Nor is it difficult to assign

this origin. The pride of power, impatient of contradiction, and viewing every departure from its own standard as an insult to its judgment, the selfish love of emoluments, connected with the prevalence of a certain system of opinions, the thirst for that distinction which attaches to the leader of a sect or party, the working of a turbulent and aspiring temper—all these causes may easily produce a zeal for opinions which the individual and the world in general may call a love of truth. These passions are overruled by Providence to the most beneficial purposes. As in the natural world it is provided that the seed should be wafted on the torrent or scattered on the tempest, when without this violent dispersion it would have perished, unproductive, on the spot where it was ripened, so has Providence often employed the furious zeal which springs from selfish motives for overthrowing deeply rooted errors and scattering the knowledge of a purer faith to the ends

of the earth. But it is not the less our duty to exterminate such unruly passions, though it be true that they are overruled to the accomplishment of good which we never contemplated. The apostle rejoiced that even through envy Christ was preached; but he was far from promising such preachers of him the reward that was laid up for those who had laboured from purer motives. The text, which has already furnished us with an explanation of the motive whence the love of truth should flow, will here again assist us to judge, from the effects which we observe, what zeal is spurious, and what is genuine. "Though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

II. (1.) The first rule which I shall mention, by which we may prevent our zeal for truth from degenerating into a mere eagerness for the maintenance of our own opinions and being contami-

nated by the mixture of selfish passions is, that we may justly suspect the purity of that zeal which is out of all proportion to the importance of the object by which it is excited. This needs but a short proof, but it would admit of a very long illustration. Zeal that arises from a regard to the welfare of men, will surely be most strongly called forth in behalf of those opinions in the prevalence or rejection of which their happiness is most deeply involved. The different temperament and habits of individuals, may make them differ in their estimate of the importance of opinions; and no man should be condemned who is eager in the support of what he conscientiously, though erroneously, considers as a vital doctrine of Revelation. But, making every allowance of this kind which the utmost stretch of candour can demand, is it possible to cast the eye over a list of those controversies which have destroyed the unity of the Christian church, without concluding that they would never

have existed, or would have been carried on in a very different spirit, had not some other motive than benevolence inspired the ardour of the partizans? It is not possible to believe that they honestly thought the points on which they differed to be so important as to justify the impetuosity with which they urged and forced others to adopt them. Supposing them, however, to have been influenced by the pride which brooks no departure from its own standard, it is easily explained why such a disproportion has existed between the importance of the subjects in dispute, in many religious controversies, and the warmth with which they have been carried on. A man's self-consequence may be as much wounded by the rejection of his opinion, on some trifling point, some matter of doubtful speculation, as if the most essential principles of religion and morals were at issue; nay, we often see, that the nearer men approach in sentiment, the more bitterly do they hate each other for that small dif-

ference which yet remains. Let us be careful not to flatter ourselves with the idea that it is an ardent love of truth which we are indulging, when with indiscriminate warmth we urge all our opinions upon the acceptance of others, but rather suspect that we are under the influence of an assuming and arrogant temper, which it is our duty to humble and restrain.

(2.) If in our zeal for the diffusion of our opinions we are prompted by that love of mankind, without which it is destitute of all merit, we shall need no exhortation or motive to the observance of mildness, gentleness and candour, in the means which we adopt for this purpose. If, on the contrary, we view the prevalence of opinions opposite to our own with pain, only because they are opinions opposite to our own, nothing is more likely than that wounded pride will betray us into unjustifiable anger and severity. I say nothing of the many rea-

sons that present themselves to the mind to show the inefficacy of such means of conviction as harsh and insulting reflections on the motives and understandings of those who differ from us: nor will I urge the notorious fact that men only wrap their prejudices more closely round them, the more we endeavour, by our stormy invectives, to compel them to throw them off; the use of such means is not in general an error of the judgment, but a defect of the heart. The same bosom cannot be inhabited by two spirits so utterly unlike as the spirit of angry controversy and that evangelical zeal for truth, which is inspired by love. As well might he pretend to benevolence, who, when he gives alms, accompanies them by an execration on the object whom he relieves, as that man lay claim to a genuine love of truth, whose arguments are revilings, and whose exhortations are anathemas. Indeed so fierce and vindictive is the aspect which some men assume towards those who differ

from them, that it is evident their concern is not for others, lest they should suffer from remaining in their errors, or their unbelief, but for themselves, that their opinions should not obtain that general assent which they consider due to them. If we ever feel any such disposition in our own breasts, instead of cherishing them under the names of a holy ardour and a pious concern for the souls of men, let us instantly expel them. We know not what spirit we are of, if we think that we honour the gospel, or show our affection for its founder, when we attempt to diffuse his religion, or restore its doctrines to their primitive purity, by the use of such means as these.

(3.) If we are earnest for the diffusion of the truth, because we believe it to be essential to human happiness, we shall never despise any opportunity of promoting it, merely because it is not splendid or extensive. He who considers

himself as sent into the world to contribute as much as possible to its good, will not allow himself, in any department of benevolent exertion, to decline an opportunity of doing good, because he thinks it inadequate to his talents, and still less because others have more exalted talents and ampler powers than himself. He knows that he is responsible not for the number but the improvement of his talents, and that however few they may be, and that he may attain the honour and the reward of a good and faithful servant, by diligently turning them to account. As there are many mansions in our heavenly Father's house, so there are many ranks and gradations among his ministers;

> "God's state
> Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
> They also serve, who only stand and wait."
>
> MILTON.

The same principle will prevent a man of benevolence from remaining idle be-

cause he can render only small and obscure services to mankind, in the way of correcting their errors. To be the reformer of religion, or the restorer of science, are offices which rarely occur to be filled, and which require for their discharge gifts that are equally rare. If therefore, we sit inactive because no such opportunities and gifts have been vouchsafed to us, we betray our selfishness. He who is really zealous for truth, because he believes its prevalence to be connected with the happiness of his fellow creatures, will never wait to consider, whether there be not other services more splendid, and likely to confer greater celebrity on those who are commissioned to discharge them. He will endeavour with as much alacrity to enlighten the mind of a peasant or a child, as he would have done, had Providence granted him the requisite talents and called him to the work, to have made his own name memorable, by connecting it with some mighty revolution in the opinions of mankind.

(4.) He whose love of truth springs from benevolence, will be patient and persevering in his endeavours to communicate it to mankind. The minds of those who are to give, and of those who are to receive, instruction, are generally very differently constituted: those who are habituated to the investigation of truth have often one particular way in which alone they feel it to be pleasant, or think it consistent with the dignity of truth, to communicate it; and this way is often precisely that in which it is least fitted to gain entrance into the minds which need to be enlightened by it. When men of this description find how slow are the conceptions of others compared with the rapidity of their own, how many obstructions to the entrance of truth prejudice and inattention cause, what long and inglorious labour they must employ to undermine the obstacles which they cannot surmount, with what toilsome steps they must wind around the base of that which can neither be

surmounted nor undermined, they are apt to turn away with the splenetic maxim "that the people must be deceived since they choose to be deceived."* But is all this any thing else than a disguised selfishness? What should we think of a man who was acquainted with a remedy for some disease which was making the most dreadful ravages amongst his countrymen, but found that they slighted it because it was new and strange; and, without putting forth a single effort to remove their unreasonable prejudices, should turn away and leave them to their fate, exclaiming "that the people must perish since they choose to perish." Let us beware that when we decline the labour necessary for contending with the prejudices of men, we do not expose ourselves to the same condemnation which every one of good feeling and principle would pronounce in the case which I have just supposed.

* Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur.

(5.) If in converting men to our own opinions, we only wish to make them happier and better, by making them wiser, we shall be careful, as far as in us lies, that our attacks upon their errors shall not have the effect of weakening any of those principles on which their virtuous conduct depends. We cannot, indeed, believe that error, in itself considered, can ever be essential to the maintenance of virtue in the world; but with respect to the individual it may. The connexion between his erroneous opinions and his principles of good conduct, though accidental in itself, is real to him who has never considered them as capable of separation; and, probably, as far as regards him, they must stand or fall together. Impressed with this consideration, a man of benevolence will be very cautious in his attacks on those principles which he knows to be associated with moral conduct in the minds of others, and will be careful not to destroy the actual foundation of a duty, however in-

judiciously chosen, unless he has a reasonable confidence that he can rebuild it on better ground. He will rather suffer some things to remain which he thinks susceptible of amendment, than expose himself, from inability to enter into the feelings of another, to the risk of doing him a greater injury than he suffers from his present errors. If, however, we proceed without this prudent, and I may add, this Christian and apostolical forbearance, rudely and vehemently to attack those principles with which, however erroneous, we are aware that those whom we endeavour to convince have connected their feelings of devotion and their habits of obedience, we shall either revolt them against the truth, or, if we succeed, shall root up the wheat and the tares, the prejudice and the virtue, together. This is meant, of course, only of instances in which individuals are addressed, whose prejudices of education are known and may be allowed for; not as if in stating truth through those chan-

nels which are inconsistent with the idea of a personal address, we were justified in keeping back what we deem true. I repeat it, it is not that error can be in itself beneficial, or truth injurious, to human beings; but that the accidental association of erroneous notions with good feelings and principles may be so strong as to render their separation impracticable; and that he who values truth as the means of virtue, will not hesitate in such a case to prefer the end to the means. Truth must triumph; but let as little injury as possible be done to those who, from good motives, but mistaken views, have attached themselves to the opposite standard.

After all, in the present state of the Christian world, the excess of zeal for true opinions in religion is an evil less probable than indifference, and less mischievous. Perhaps it may be said with truth that indifference has always been the greatest evil, even in those ages in

which intolerant zeal has broken out in its most furious shape of persecution. The wildest storm that ever wrought ocean into fury and dashed navies on its shores, has been less destructive to the wellbeing of the system, than that motionless tranquillity would be; which would change the whole world of waters into one stagnant, fetid, poisonous mass. The activity even of intolerant controversy, at least rouses the mind to put forth its powers: the acrimonious zeal of opposite sects often leads them to cultivate a more pure morality; knowing as they do that they shall obtain no credit for the correctness of their creed, while their practice is notoriously deficient. But the languid spirit of indifference takes away every noble principle of exertion, checks all emulation, and locks up the powers of the mind in indolent inactivity. While therefore we are careful that in contending earnestly for the faith, which we believe to have once been delivered to the saints, we are not hurried into an un-

christian spirit of bigotry, let us beware of an equally unchristian temper, that of indifference to religious truth. The golden mean is not difficult to find, if we take for our guide the gospel precepts and the examples of its founder and earliest preachers. And may the Father of Lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, send down upon us all that meek and heavenly wisdom which is pure, gentle and peaceable, without partiality and without hypocrisy! Amen.

THE END.

Printed by J. Belcher & Son, 6, High-street, Birmingham.

(3)

THE PRESENT STATE OF RELIGIOUS PARTIES IN ENGLAND

REPRESENTED AND IMPROVED

IN

A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN ESSEX-STREET CHAPEL, MAY 17, AND REPEATED OCTOBER 18, 1818:

ALSO

IN RENSHAW-STREET CHAPEL, LIVERPOOL, SEPTEMBER 20;

BY THOMAS BELSHAM.

"If the contending parties were left to themselves, after they had reasoned, and railed, and wrangled, and declaimed, and preached, and written against each other, and eased themselves in that way; they would at last sit down and be quiet for very weariness, or for want of hearers or readers... Which advice was favourably received, BUT NOT FOLLOWED."

Holstenius to Pope Innocent X. in Jortin's Pref. to Eccl. Hist.

SECOND EDITION.

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1818.

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To the CONGREGATION of UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS assembling in Renshaw-street Chapel, Liverpool.

MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

AGREEABLY to the desire which you so kindly and respectfully expressed, I now present you with the Discourse which you honoured with your approbation; though I must request to be excused from acceding to your generous offer of bearing the expense of the publication.

I shall think myself amply remunerated if this little tract should contribute in any degree to promote its intended object,—an active and enlightened zeal for uncorrupted christianity, combined with candour and good-will to those who are equally sincere with ourselves in the investigation of truth, though from circumstances over which they had no controul, they

may not have been equally successful. To be ready to acknowledge and approve that which is excellent in all parties; to be candid to the errors and failings of our brethren; to be thankful to those who remind us of our own, and to avail ourselves of faithful reproof; to vie with each other in love and good works; and cordially to unite with our brethren, without distinction of party, in every scheme that is adapted to dispel ignorance, to diffuse knowledge, virtue, and happiness, and to diminish the sum of human misery,—this is the true spirit of Christianity, without which mere knowledge is as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal. And I am happy, my friends, in the persuasion that this is the spirit which you have learned to cherish and to cultivate in connexion with my amiable friend the reverend George Harris, your able and active minister.

It is hardly probable, considering my advanced time of life, that I shall ever have another opportunity of addressing you in public; but I shall always feel a deep interest in your

intellectual, moral, and christian improvement. And that by your rapid advancement in knowledge and faith, and your superior attainments in piety, charity, humility, and benevolence, you may fulfil the joy of your faithful minister, may animate and encourage his labours, and finally become the crown of his rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus, will to the latest hour of life be the ardent desire and prayer of

Your faithful, affectionate,

and obliged friend and servant,

T. BELSHAM.

Essex House,
October 25, 1818.

A DISCOURSE.

Col. iii. 11.—*Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all.*

It cannot be denied that we live in very extraordinary times, political and religious. A revolution which began in peace but ended in blood, the sad occasion of a war of more than twenty years duration, has lately been concluded: but the bitter consequences of it yet remain; and whither they will extend, and how they will terminate, are problems much too difficult for human wisdom to resolve, and which time alone can unfold.

But the state of the religious world is equally extraordinary with that of the political, and particularly in our own country. Political convulsions uniformly excite corresponding religious

agitations; and no wonder. For, in a season of great public calamity and private distress, the human mind naturally looks to and leans upon the consolations of religion. Considering, therefore, the occurrences of the last twenty years, it is not at all surprising that the national mind should have been more drawn to the subject of religion than at any time since the civil wars of the seventeenth century.

The design of the present discourse is to offer some reflections upon the present state of religion in this country; in order to which, it will be necessary briefly to describe what that state actually is.

The two great classes of religious professors in this country are those who adhere to the discipline and worship of the established Church, and those who secede from it; or in other words, CHURCHMEN and DISSENTERS.

The frequenters and supporters of the established worship are, together, far more numerous than any class of nonconformists separately considered, but perhaps inferior to the whole collectively. And in the judgment of many impartial persons this disparity is continually augmenting[a].

[a] And, as many think, not the less in consequence of some of the means which are used to restore the popularity of the Church. Such, for instance, as the *exclusive* system of the

The ESTABLISHED CHURCH is at this time divided into two great parties.

The FIRST and by far the most powerful party consists of those who adhere to the Church upon the ground of *political expedience;* because they think, and perhaps justly, that an establishment of religion is of great importance to the security of government and of good morals, and are persuaded that the existing establishment is best adapted to the British constitution, and ought to be supported, unless very grave and important reasons can be assigned to show the necessity of a change. Many no doubt support the establishment from motives of self-interest; and great numbers from fashion, or from the prejudices of education.

Of the great mass of adherents to the established worship, some are to be found who still contend for the divine right of episcopacy: but the better informed defend this mode of ecclesiastical discipline upon the far more tenable ground of expedience. Many are not unwilling to acknowledge that there is much in the Church which requires altera-

National Schools; the inflexible resistance of the rulers of the Church to every species and to every degree of reformation in the Articles and the Liturgy; and the unaccountable hostility of the High Church party to the evangelical clergy, who contribute more than all the rest to retain the lower orders of the people within the pale of the Establishment.

tion and amendment: but the great majority are decided enemies to every species and every degree of reform, and insist, unwisely as many judicious friends of the establishment think, upon maintaining the doctrine, discipline, and service of the Church in every point the same as it was left by Queen Elizabeth: and those who are sensible of the expedience of reform content themselves with the maxim, that it is better to adhere to the Church with all its faults than to join in any form of nonconformist worship. Some indeed carry their principles so far as to confound separation from a national church with the sin of *schism*, which consists in unreasonable and angry strife; and is as remote as possible from peaceable dissent upon reasonable grounds.

Many who have no religion at all, and who even make a jest of all pretensions to it, are nevertheless zealous advocates of the established Church; chiefly because they well know that an establishment of religion is a mighty engine in the hands of a statesman: and the more so in proportion as its dogmas are received and submitted to without examination or demur. These men would be Catholics at Rome and Mahometans in Turkey. And such persons have commonly been the most forward to promote religious persecution. Men who are themselves serious believers

can make allowance for conscientious scruples in others; but they who believe nothing, naturally resolve all pretences to serious religion and to conscientious doubts, into fraud and hypocrisy.

A SECOND, and a very numerous, respectable, and increasing body of members of the established Church, are those who are commonly called Evangelical, who *seriously believe the doctrines* of the articles, and who publicly profess and teach them. They are generally pious in their conversation, and exemplary in their morals; and are very zealous, active, and liberal, in propagating what they conceive to be the doctrines of the gospel and those of the established Church. These greatly prefer the discipline of the Church and its modes of worship to those of any class of nonconformists, and cultivate a popular strain of preaching which commonly fills the churches, wherever they are settled. One would naturally suppose that this description of churchmen must be in high estimation with the ruling powers, and with those who profess the warmest zeal for the prosperity of the Church. But the fact is otherwise: and the reason is this. The evangelical churchmen, though they are true and ardent friends to the order and discipline of the Church, justly lay a still greater stress upon purity of faith and seriousness of spirit; and these qualities they

love and honour wherever they are found, whether among churchmen or dissenters. They are therefore ready to join cordially with nonconformists in every scheme the object of which is to promote what they believe to be the truth and spirit of their common christianity, whether within or without the pale of the Establishment, and whether immediately conducive or not to its separate interest. This highly meritorious and truly christian liberality is exceedingly offensive to those who prize the interest of the Church as paramount to all other considerations; and for this reason the evangelical clergy and laity of the established religion are held in greater aversion by what are called the High Church party than even the most obnoxious of the nonconforming sects.

There is also in the established Church a THIRD party; not indeed much considered, or much spoken of, amidst the clamours of contending factions; but which is probably a growing party, and may eventually be the prevailing one. It is the party of those who *study the Scriptures* seriously, diligently, and impartially, without regard to the *opinions of men*, or the authority of formularies and creeds: who having discovered the errors of the established system, and the simplicity of evangelical truth, still choose, for reasons which to themselves are satisfactory, to remain

quietly within the pale of the Church, and to conform outwardly to its worship; being at the same time anxious for a reformation in its articles, in its creeds, and in its liturgies; and watchful for an opportunity of promoting and accelerating this desirable object.—I feel for such: and though I cannot but admire and applaud the spirit, the principle, and the fortitude of those who have thrown off the galling yoke, and have escaped out of this spiritual Babylon; yet when I call to mind that the exemplary founder of this congregation was himself a decided Unitarian ten years before he saw it to be his duty to quit the church in which he officiated, and to which he was attached by the strongest ties, I dare not condemn those who, like him, fearful of deserting a post of usefulness, or influenced by any other consideration which to them appears sufficient, still think it right to remain at their posts, to struggle with their peculiar difficulties, and to do what they can in their present stations to diffuse the light of truth, and the spirit of inquiry, and so to facilitate and to advance the reformation of the Church. "Happy is he who condemneth not himself in the thing that he alloweth!"

I shall now give a brief and cursory view of the present state of the NONCONFORMIST CHURCHES,

And here it may be noted as a remarkable fact, that the old distinction which at the commencement of the last century divided the nonconformists into the two great classes of PRESBYTERIANS and INDEPENDENTS is now almost become obsolete. At the time of the Revolution, when the Toleration Act was passed, the great mass of nonconformists agreed in doctrine with each other and with the Church; and would not even accept of a toleration in which the few Unitarians who then existed might be allowed to participate. Their chief difference related to church government and church discipline. The Presbyterians contending for an ecclesiastical authority which should be vested in presbyteries, synods, and assemblies; and the Independents asserting that every separate congregation is a complete church, in which a majority of the communicants are authorized to exercise all the powers of discipline which may be necessary to christian order, and that the minister himself is nothing more than the chairman of the meeting, possessing no privilege but the casting vote. Each of these parties, as well as the Episcopalians, maintaining that its own form of church discipline and government was of divine authority, and that theirs was the only true apostolical church, to which it was the duty of every individual to conform,

PRESBYTERIANISM has for many years been lost in England: and though here and there the name of Assemblies, and even of Presbyteries, may be retained, the authority of these bodies is totally gone. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, which is essentially presbyterian, and which originally acknowledged and held communion with the Presbyterians of England, has within these few years abandoned them altogether, and prohibited their ministers from officiating in the established churches in that part of the United Kingdom, to which they formerly obtained easy access. There are, however, still many congregations which choose to retain the name of Presbyterian. They are chiefly such as indulge a greater latitude of thinking upon religious subjects than their Independent brethren; and who do not wholly adopt the mode of Independent discipline. The INDEPENDENTS generally adhere to Calvinistic principles, and to their original plan of church government: but upon the latter they appear to lay less stress than in former times; and if their brethren agree with them in doctrine and in spirit, they make considerable allowance for a difference of judgment and practice in things now allowed to be indifferent.

A THIRD denomination of Christians were like-

wise partakers of the benefit of the Toleration Act, and they still continue to exist as a numerous opulent and respectable body. These are THE BAPTISTS, or those Christians who defer the baptism of the descendants of baptized persons till they come to years of discretion.

The Baptists are distinguished into General and Particular. The General Baptists are of the Arminian persuasion. They believe in free-will and general redemption. They maintain that Christ died for all men; and that all may be saved if they will; that the offer of salvation is made to all mankind, and that none are excluded from final happiness by an absolute and irreversible decree.

The Particular Baptists are strict Calvinists. They believe that from all eternity God elected a certain number to everlasting life: and they maintain that the benefits of the death of Christ extend to the elect only: for that if Christ had died for all mankind, with regard to the majority he would have died in vain. It would not, perhaps, be difficult to prove that the Particular Baptists reason most consistently upon their common principles. But as the whole controversy is founded upon the extravagant supposition that Christ bore in his own person the punishment due to the sins of men, and thereby appeased the anger of

God, and satisfied the claims of eternal justice, it would be useless to investigate the consequences of a principle so unreasonable in itself, and so utterly inconsistent with the divine character, and the express declarations of the Scriptures both of the Old Testament and the New.

It is a remarkable fact, that the General Baptists, though not a numerous, have usually distinguished themselves as an inquisitive and an enlightened body of Christians: and that some of the most learned and most liberal theologians of modern times, both at home and in foreign countries, have been members of this communion. Probably, as the principle of their dissent from their Calvinistic brethren was a desire to vindicate the divine character, which they considered as inculpated by the gloomy system of the reformer of Geneva, the same principle led them to examine other doctrines with greater freedom; and consequently to reject more of the popular errors which have prevailed in the world, and to embrace a purer and a more liberal system of faith.

Another party has lately appeared in the christian world which has hitherto been embraced by comparatively a very small number, and is not likely ever to make many proselytes; because it contravenes the uniform practice of the christian church from the age of the apostles; I mean the

party of those who *deny the permanency* of the institution of baptism, and who conceive of it as a rite which was limited to proselytes from another religion. The advocates of this doctrine, though few in number, have commonly been persons of considerable respectability, and some of them of great learning. Their error, for such I conceive it to be, arises from the unfounded assumption that Christianity is of a nature too spiritual and refined to admit of positive institutions, and from neglecting to inquire into, or duly to appreciate, the historical evidence of what Christ and his apostles actually thought fit to practise and to enjoin.

The last century was memorable for giving birth to two numerous sects, which from very small beginnings have advanced to great notoriety and importance. These are the two sects of METHODISTS, the Arminian and the Calvinistic.

The founders of these sects were contemporary students at the university of Oxford; who being themselves of a pious and enthusiastic disposition, prevailed upon some others of their fellow-collegians to join with them in their religious exercises. When they quitted the university they travelled up and down the country, preaching sometimes in churches, sometimes in dissenting

chapels, and sometimes in the streets and fields, with a view to convert and to reform the people; combining with their zeal a great portion of enthusiasm, absurdity, and extravagance. Soon after these leaders of the sect had left the university, they differed upon the question of general and particular redemption, after which they separated; Mr. Whitfield becoming the founder of the Calvinistic, and Mr. Wesley of the Arminian, Methodists[b].

[b] George Whitfield was a man of uncommon eloquence and fervour of spirit. He preached with great success both in England and America; and many congregations were formed under his inspection, and took their name from him. But he was a man of great simplicity of mind and artlessness of manners: he had no desire to set himself up as the head of a sect, and he framed no system of discipline to distinguish his followers from other denominations of Christians. The consequence is, that the Calvinistic Methodists are now very much confounded with the regular Independents. There are, however, some shades of difference. The Methodists do not adopt the rigorous discipline of the independent churches; and they are less attached to a learned ministry. On account of these differences they are called by some the fourth denomination of Dissenters; and in London these have been computed to outnumber all the other denominations taken together.

John Wesley was a man of a very strong and comprehensive mind, of very insinuating address, and a very mild and engaging speaker. His great ambition was to be the founder of a sect; and to this end he retained in his own hands during his life all the property which was collected from his followers

The existence of these two theological parties, both numerous, and both active and zealous in making proselytes, has produced a considerable effect upon the manners of the country, and particularly in the lower classes of society. Many regard the Methodists of both descriptions as, generally speaking, immoral and dishonest, as wolves in sheep's clothing, who have done and are doing much to corrupt and to deteriorate the morals of the inferior orders. And it cannot but happen

for ecclesiastical purposes, and the whole discipline of the sect. He erected chapels, he educated and ordained ministers, he appointed them their respective stations, and removed them at pleasure; he divided the country into circuits, and his disciples into classes, appointing to each their proper officers, and superintending the whole himself. In this way the original *Methodists* (for that is the title which, though at first applied by way of reproach, they choose to retain,) formed a united and well-disciplined body under the direction of one head. After Mr. Wesley's death, the property and the ecclesiastical authority devolved by his will upon a large body of ministers nominated by him as trustees, with power to supply their own vacancies. This body takes the name of the Conference, and acting usually with the policy for which aristocracies are celebrated, the sect of Methodists under their direction remains embodied, annually increasing its numbers and extending its influence till it has at length become a compact and numerous party, of no small political consideration and consequence. This fact was abundantly evident in the resistance made to Lord Sidmouth's bill, in which the Wesleyan Methodists took a leading part.

in a sect so numerous that many will be hypocritical, and many immoral. And the more severe the profession, and the more zeal and bitterness there is in judgments passed upon others, the more enemies they will create to themselves; and the more will every miscarriage and every fault of the members, and especially the prominent members, of the Society be watched, and blazoned, and exaggerated, and imputed to the whole body. But upon the whole, much as I differ from the Methodists of both parties in their speculative creed, I am decidedly of opinion that they have done unspeakable good among the lower orders of society; and have contributed beyond all calculation to reform and regenerate certain descriptions of men to whom no regular minister would have extended his notice. I particularly refer to the colliers, miners, and others, in various parts of England, who from a state of ignorance and barbarism little better than that of savages, are now become sober, honest, and industrious; and instead of being the pests and terror of the districts which they inhabit, are transformed into regular, peaceable, and useful members of society. This is a benefit of the noblest kind, the praise of which cannot without the greatest injustice be denied to the Methodists: and it is an honour which they have dearly purchased amidst

innumerable hardships, injuries, and insults; and often even at the peril of their lives.

The Society commonly called QUAKERS, but who choose to distinguish themselves by the title of FRIENDS, with respect to numbers is supposed to remain nearly stationary, the members not being much animated with a spirit of proselytism. It is to be lamented that this respectable Society has of late departed in any degree from their original liberality with regard to speculative opinions; and, with a violence bordering upon persecution, have disowned some persons of great worth and piety, for avowing opinions which a century ago would probably have passed unnoticed, if not even approved[c]. But the merits of this distinguished and highly useful body of Christians have far exceeded and amply atoned for their occasional failings. Excluded by their principles from fashionable luxuries and fashionable diversions, they have devoted much of their time and wealth and talents to the purposes of philanthropy. To their active

[c] See the case of Hannah Barnard, and of William Rathbone, of whose talents and virtues any Society might justly be proud; also of Thomas Foster; and more particularly that of certain Quakers in Ireland as related by Mr. Rathbone. Penn's Sandy Foundation Shaken shows that a belief in the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity was not always insisted upon by the Quakers, as a necessary qualification for admission into their communion.

and persevering efforts the country is in a considerable degree indebted for the abolition of the slave-trade; and to their strenuous exertions it has been principally owing that the establishment of schools for the education of the poor was not suffered to sink in its infant state, under the vehement opposition which it encountered from very powerful adversaries, and through the imprudence of the individual, however meritorious in many respects, with whom that great and good design originated. Of late this wise and benevolent Society have directed their attention towards alleviating the miseries and correcting the morals of those sinks and nurseries of every thing that is bad in the human character, the common prisons; and have undertaken the apparently hopeless task of reforming the lives of their wretched inhabitants: in which difficult process, however, some enlightened and humane individuals have succeeded to a degree which has not only attracted the notice and the praise of royalty, but which deserves and must secure the approbation and applause of every friend to virtue, to humanity, and religion[d].

[d] See the interesting relation of the success of Mrs. Fry's meritorious efforts to instruct and reform the female prisoners in Newgate, in Mr. Fowell Buxton's account of Prison-Discipline. This lady was honoured with the particular notice of the late Queen in her majesty's visit to the Mansion-house to see the National Schools.

In the course of the last fifty years, in direct opposition to the full tide of religious prejudice, and amidst the clamours of hosts of adversaries, the TRUE UNITARIAN DOCTRINE, under the protection of Divine Providence, has lifted up its head and made its way in a manner, and with a rapidity, which its most sanguine advocates would not have ventured to anticipate. Half a century ago the great doctrine of the proper unity of God, and the simple humanity of Jesus Christ, were scarcely known: or if they were upon any occasion mentioned, it created an universal thrill of horror. *Here* indeed a Newton[e] or a Haynes[f], and *there* a Lardner[g], a Cardale[h], or a Fleming[i];—a profound and in-

[e] See the evidence of Sir Isaac Newton's Unitarianism distinctly and ably stated by the Rev. B. Mardon of Glasgow, in the Appendix to his sensible and judicious Letter to the Rev. Dr. Chalmers. This evidence is also very judiciously exhibited by Capt. Gifford, R.N., in his late admirable "Remonstrance to the Bishop of St. David's."

[f] Hopton Haynes, Esq. was assay-master to the Mint, during the period that Sir Isaac Newton was master of the Mint. He was the intimate friend of Sir Isaac Newton, and wrote a defence of the Unitarian doctrine, in a treatise entitled "A Scripture Account of the Attributes and Worship of God, and of the Character and Offices of Jesus Christ."

[g] Dr. Lardner wrote his Letter on the Logos many years before he ventured upon its publication.

[h] Mr. Cardale was the learned pastor of a small congregation at Evesham in Worcestershire. He published in the year 1767

quiring philosopher on one side, or a learned, impartial, and judicious divine on the other,—might be seen, who to his intimate friends would venture to disclose the portentous and dangerous secret, that in his estimation pure Unitarianism was the doctrine of the gospel, and the genuine belief of the primitive church. But such disclosures were commonly received with surprise and coldness; and were secretly attributed to that pride of learning, that love of novelty, and that fondness for speculation, which so often mislead the judgment of the philosopher and the scholar, and which give him a distaste to the doctrines of the gospel, and reconcile his mind to the grossest perversion of the plain language of scripture. But, generally speaking, the truth was seldom divulged, and the light which had been kindled was concealed. Indeed, it was not very safe to make it known; and few had the hardihood to encounter the general hatred of mankind.

a defence of the proper Unitarian doctrine, in a treatise entitled "The true Doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ considered," under the assumed name of *Phileleutherus Vigorniensis*; which is a learned and excellent work.

[1] Dr. Caleb Fleming was an eminent dissenting preacher in London, of avowed Unitarian principles. A very interesting Memoir of this distinguished divine, by the Rev. L. Holden of Tenterden, is contained in that valuable work The Monthly Repository, for July 1818. Dr. Fleming died July 21, 1779, in the eighty-first year of his age.

The destined period at last arrived. A man was found who possessed the patience, the learning, and the impartiality which were requisite for the detection of error and the discovery of truth; the honesty and courage to avow it; the firmness and fortitude to sacrifice his worldly interests and his dazzling prospects at the shrine of conscience; and by a manly profession of his principles, and the public dedication of his labours to the promulgation of Christian truth, to rouse the attention of mankind.—This man was Theophilus Lindsey:—who, after he had honourably resigned all his preferments and prospects in the church, was directed by Providence to this great metropolis, where he unexpectedly found many friends, who revered his magnanimity, and embraced his principles; and who in a short time enabled him to build this chapel in which we are now assembled; which has the honour to be the first temple in this island which was erected for and expressly consecrated to the worship of the one true God even the Father, through the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

This excellent person soon found a friend and an ally of a congenial spirit in one of the greatest philosophers of whom this country could ever boast; and who, though he was adorned with all the honours which almost all the learned philoso-

phical societies in Europe and America could bestow, esteemed it his greatest honour and his dearest title to be the friend of Mr. Lindsey, and a fellow-labourer with him in promoting the great cause of evangelical truth. And the success which in due time followed the combined labours of Mr. Lindsey and Dr. Priestley was far beyond what their humility and modesty ever led them to contemplate. By degrees the public attention was turned to the subject. First one, and then another, discovered the light of truth, and avowed their convictions. The number gradually increased. The alarm subsided. Societies, one after another, were instituted for the diffusion of religious knowledge. Congregations adopted Unitarian principles; and were superintended by learned, pious, and laborious ministers, who, discarding antiquated and obsolete formularies of faith, bestowed the most meritorious and indefatigable pains in instructing the rising generation in the purity of revealed truth; and who set at defiance the noisy declamation of ignorant and intemperate men, who thunder hell and damnation in the ears of those who, after calm and serious inquiry, find reason to renounce those strange and unscriptural opinions, which pass with many for the peculiar doctrines of the gospel. This unspeakably important truth,—that the Father ALONE is God,

and the only proper object of religious worship; also that Jesus Christ is the servant and messenger of God, in all respects like unto his brethren, and commissioned to reveal the awful truth that God will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he hath ordained:—this great truth, which constitutes the sum and substance of the christian doctrine, and which lies at the foundation of all virtuous practice and future hope, has now, I trust, struck so deep a root, that it is in no danger of being ever again overrun and choked by the thorns and briars of anti-christian error; but will in due time, under the culture of a never-failing succession of skilful labourers, and watered with the dews of heaven, rear its glorious head like the cedar among the trees of the forest, till not only all the inhabitants of the land, but all the nations of the earth, are refreshed with its grateful shade[k].

[k] The author in his usual but now perhaps somewhat *obsolete* way, restricts the application of the term Unitarian to those who believe the simple humanity of Jesus Christ. In this sense it was uniformly applied by his venerable friends Dr. Priestley and Mr. Lindsey, and by their learned predecessor Dr. Lardner: and by this restriction he conceives that he best avoids confusion of ideas. Indeed, he cannot think the term properly applicable to modern Arians, who, while they allow that Jesus Christ is the maker, supporter, and governor of the world, nevertheless claim the title of Unitarians, because, truly, in direct contradiction to the language of the psalmist,—"O come,

In this pleasing expectation I am the more disposed to indulge, when I compare the present state of the Unitarian doctrine with that which existed thirty years ago; when I first had the happiness to discern its evidence, and when there were only two or three congregations in the kingdom, and here and there an individual besides, who acknowledged its truth[1]. Whereas, there is now

let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker, FOR HE IS OUR GOD,"—they say, "No, we will not worship the Lord our maker, for he is not our God; but we will worship our Maker's maker, for he only is our God." If this is not setting up a God of their own in opposition to the God of the scriptures, it is hard to say what polytheism is; and if theirs be the pure doctrine of revelation, the author confesses that he has not yet been fortunate enough to discover it. If, however, these worshipers of their Maker's maker choose to apply to themselves the title of Unitarian, they have a right to do so, and the author will not quarrel with them about a word: but he must beg permission to use his own liberty in the case, and to be excused from using the word Unitarian in their acceptation of it. With regard to those who hold the modern notion of the simple pre-existence of Christ, the epithet of Unitarian cannot reasonably be denied to them. But why such persons should assume the title of Arians when they hold hardly any one principle in common with Arianism, and when by taking the name they give their countenance to the unscriptural and monstrous doctrine of a delegated and imperfect maker of the world, who has no claim to the religious homage of the creatures of his own formation, it is difficult to say, and it becomes them very seriously to consider.

[1] It has been hinted that the account given of the limited ex-

hardly a considerable town in England where there is not a flourishing society of Unitarian christians, and hardly a village in which there is not some individual who, being himself instructed in the truth, does not feel a generous desire to impart knowledge and happiness to his neighbours. And not only in this country, but in the vast continent of America, the doctrine of one God, and of one mediator between God and man, the MAN Christ Jesus, is advancing with a rapid and continually accelerated march. It has found its way even to the East Indies; in which remote region, it deserves to be mentioned, as a memorable fact in

tent of the Unitarian doctrine is not correct; and that half a century ago Unitarianism prevailed among the Presbyterian congregations in the North of England to as great a degree as it does at present. Nor can it be denied that a large proportion of ministers at that time were Arians, and that they seldom troubled their congregations with orthodox doctrine. But, will it be maintained that these ministers took much pains to correct the errors of their hearers, and to instruct them in right principles? Mr. Seddon of Manchester indeed both preached and published in defence of Unitarian principles: but he seems to have stood almost alone. "We were all Arians," says Dr. Priestley, speaking of the tutors at Warrington; "and the only subject of much consequence on which we differed respected the doctrine of atonement. THE ONLY SOCINIAN IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD was Mr. Seddon of Manchester; and we all wondered at him: but then we never entered into any particular examination of the subject."—Priestley's Memoirs, vol. i. p. 53.

the progress of christian knowledge, that a number of poor natives, without the assistance of an European instructor, and by the exercise of their own understandings only, in the use of means acquired by their own sagacity and industry, have formed among themselves a congregation, small indeed, but consisting of natives only: a congregation of well-informed Unitarian christians, who, without any aid or countenance from European patrons, have erected a place for pure Unitarian worship; in which the very prayers used in Essex Street Chapel, translated by themselves into their own language, are read as the formulary of their devotion. And there is great reason to believe, that, even among the more learned inhabitants of that distant clime, an Unitarian form of christianity would be more likely to succeed than the popular doctrine of three persons in one God[m].

Having thus exhibited a brief delineation of the principal distinctions among protestant christians in this country, I shall now add a few observations and reflections.

[m] See a Letter from William Roberts, a native of Malabar, to the Unitarian Society; to which is prefixed an Introduction, containing a brief account of Rammohun Roy, the learned Unitarian Brahmun of Calcutta. Published by Hunter in St. Paul's Churchyard, and by Eaton in Holborn.

1. In the first place, the great attention paid to religion within the last twenty years has been highly creditable to the nation, and of signal benefit to it.

I readily admit that some religions have a direct tendency to bewilder the understanding, and to deteriorate the heart. I can even allow that some forms of christianity itself, to a certain extent, have an evil effect upon the mind. But, generally speaking, the christian religion in every form produces effects which are upon the whole highly beneficial. In its most corrupted state, christianity teaches the doctrine of a future state of reward and punishment; in its most degraded form the religion of Jesus provides for the poor, it elevates the condition and character of the female sex: it discountenances slavery, and is hostile to oppression in every shape.

In this country various forms of religion are established or tolerated: some are better and some are worse: all of them are professed by zealous advocates: and the result upon the whole is highly beneficial.

It is to the benign spirit of the christian religion that we are chiefly indebted for that memorable event, which to the latest generation will be celebrated as the glory of this age and country, of the reign in which it took place, and of the illustrious

band of christian patriots with whom the measure originated, and by whom it was supported for many years with the most exemplary resolution and perseverance, through an arduous struggle and against a formidable opposition, till at length it obtained a complete and glorious triumph,—the abolition of that disgrace to humanity the AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE.

The general adoption of the NEW SYSTEM FOR THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR is one of the greatest improvements of the age, and augurs the happiest consequences to the rising generation. For this we are indebted to the prevailing spirit of piety and benevolence. And though human infirmity has in this instance blended itself with the generous spirit of christianity (and in what production of human merit is not human infirmity too conspicuous?)—though a spirit of party has mixed itself up with the spirit of piety in promoting this important object, and has in some degree tainted the motive and deteriorated the effect, yet upon the whole great good is done, much light is communicated, much knowledge is diffused, much piety and virtue are inculcated. Nor must we deny the existence of religious principle in al cases where there is a lamentable alloy of party violence. Human motives are seldom perfectly pure; and human nature must be taken as it is, with all its frailties and imperfections. More good

will be really effected than many narrow-minded persons expect or intend. And where good is actually accomplished, let us imitate the example of the apostle, who rejoiced and was determined to rejoice when Christ was preached, "whether it were from envy and strife, or from love and good-will."

Missionary societies have been formed, and great exertions have been made, to propagate the gospel in foreign lands: and he knows little of the value of the christian religion, and feels but little of its spirit, who is not desirous of its further promulgation. Parties of different denominations of christians have vied with each other in their exertions for this great object. But to their honour be it recorded that these exertions have been generally conducted with a spirit of generous emulation, and not of mean hostility. Some of these pious undertakings have failed: partly perhaps through want of prudence or of other necessary qualifications in the persons employed; and partly from unforeseen and insurmountable difficulties. But the merit of the undertaking was the same. The zeal, the piety, the self-denial, the patience, the activity, and the perseverance of the missionaries, have been beyond all praise. And in many instances their labours have not been lost. Particularly in South-Africa, in the West-Indies, and in the islands of the Pacific Ocean, among the

negroes and the savages who most need religious instruction, success has far exceeded all antecedent expectation; and the banner of the cross has waved in triumph over the ruins of altars which lately reeked with the blood of human victims[n].

That extraordinary phænomenon in the moral world, the Bible Society, owes its origin and its success to the prevailing spirit of piety and religion. In this Society there are indeed some points which I cannot altogether approve. I cannot think it right that the faulty version of a faulty text should be made the standard of general circulation. It is strange that the Society should have declined to avail itself of those improvements in the sacred text which have been the result of a laborious and accurate collation of many hundred manuscripts within the last two hundred years, and should have chosen to adopt and give sanction to a text which was compiled from the negligent comparison of a few, and those not the most correct originals; in consequence of which, they have given circulation to many erroneous readings and to some notorious interpolations. These and some other errors are, I think, imputable to the Bible Society, which is not therefore entitled to unqualified praise.

[n] See the Letters from Otaheite in the Evangelical Magazine for February 1818, and La Trobe's and Campbell's Voyages to South-Africa.

But, notwithstanding these blemishes, I have no hesitation in acknowledging it as my decided conviction, that the extraordinary merits of this distinguished Society far outweigh its errors and defects. It has indirectly promoted a spirit of harmony and conciliation among the different parties and denominations of christians throughout the whole christian world; by almost all of whom, from the Greek and Roman churches to the protestant non-conformist and the proper Unitarian, the Bible Society has been zealously patronised. And the actual distribution of two millions of copies of the sacred records in different languages through the habitable world, cannot fail, sooner or later, to produce some great effect. Such at least must be the judgment of those who regard the scriptures, and especially the christian scriptures, as containing a complete code of revealed truth, and a perfect rule of life: as the great charter of christian privileges, and the foundation of our immortal hopes; which must therefore be equally and supremely interesting to every individual of the human race.

I make no mention of societies for bettering the condition of the poor, and finding employment for the industrious; for affording refuge to the destitute, and correcting the morals of the profligate; for restoring health to the sick, for administering relief to the aged and infirm, and alle-

viating the sufferings of the stranger in distress: —these, and many other charities which abound not only in this great metropolis, but in every district of the empire, have their chief foundation in christian benevolence, and derive their main and surest support from the principles of that religion, which, where it is genuine, ever breathes a spirit of the purest and most diffusive philanthropy,—a spirit which the benevolent founder of the christian doctrine has sealed and consecrated by his own recorded declaration, "Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

2. It is greatly to the honour of this age and country, that with so much religion there should be so little persecution.

In former times, when religion was more than usually the object of public attention, the party which was uppermost, whether catholic or protestant, whether episcopalian or presbyterian, uniformly persecuted the weaker sect; and, under pretence of the glory of God and the good of souls, made spoil of their property, imprisoned and harassed their persons, and not unfrequently put their pious and conscientious neighbours to a lingering or a tormenting death. Thanks be to God, this spirit does not now prevail in the ruling powers. It is indeed lamentable to think that in an en-

lightened and tolerant age any particle of this anti-christian venom should remain: and more especially that it should be found where it could be least expected, in spiritual persons in high places,—in those who ought to be examples to others of the meekness, the candour, and the forbearing spirit of the gospel. How strange is it that any who were high in rank and character in the church, should have committed themselves so far as to express a disgraceful regret at the repeal of those wicked laws which condemned their unoffending fellow-christians to the loss of liberty, to poverty, and exile! But the good sense of the country cried shame upon this unchristian and barbarous spirit. And the liberality of the legislature has shown how little it sympathized in these unreasonable complaints, by extending its protection to christians similarly circumstanced in the sister island, to whom the benefits of the former law did not reach. Some religious restraints indeed yet remain, especially upon our catholic brethren, which it would be the honour and the wisdom of government wholly to remove. But let praise be given where praise is due. The extension of religious liberty in the present reign has far surpassed any thing before known in the annals of the country: and every alteration of the persecuting laws has been an amelioration of that barbarous code.

Nor is the spirit of the times the spirit of per-

secution in the inferior orders of society. For though many think ill of their brethren for differing from them in what they regard as the peculiar doctrines of the gospel; and though they exclude them from christian fellowship and load them with opprobrious names, I am persuaded that they seldom mean any personal injury; and that many who freely deliver them over to God's wrath and curse in another world, would at the same time be the first to stand forward in the protection of their civil rights and religious liberties, and would scorn to make use of any weapons but those of reason and of scripture.

3. We see the wisdom and the happy consequences of religious liberty.

Though religious liberty in this country is not speculatively perfect, it is in a great degree practically so; and all who profess the christian religion, possess a right by law to avow and to defend their religious opinions, and to worship God in the way which their consciences approve.

And what has been the result of that boundless variety of religious opinions to which this wise indulgence has given birth? Has it induced men to rob and plunder one another, and to cut each other's throats, on account of their religious differences? Far from it. Some angry words perhaps have passed; some irritating discussions have possi-

bly been provoked: but they have all vanished into *thin air*. And the happy consequence of religious liberty has been, that men of the most opposite sentiments have lived upon terms of mutual civility; have transacted business together in an amicable way; have discovered that virtue, honour, and integrity are confined to no sect or party; have learned to form a better opinion of each other's principles and character; and, what is more than all, have combined together to produce a sum of benevolent exertion which is almost unparalleled in the history of the world. Such are the happy consequences of acting up to the spirit of that beautiful maxim, that "CONSCIENCE IS NOT CONTROULABLE BY HUMAN LAWS, NOR AMENABLE TO HUMAN TRIBUNALS[o]."

4. Let christians of every denomination learn their duty.

In the first place, let them seek after truth with an honest and unbiassed mind. They who thus seek shall find; and truth when found will amply reward all the labour and anxiety of investigation: it is more precious than rubies. But if the humble inquirer should notwithstanding all his diligence and faithfulness be left in error, let him rest

[o] See Lord Mansfield's memorable Speech in the House of Lords upon the Dissenters' Appeal, in Dr. Furneaux's Letters to Judge Blackstone, 2d edit. Appendix.

assured that involuntary and unavoidable error shall never be imputed as a crime, and that if inadvertently he should even take up any deadly thing, it shall not hurt him.

Secondly, Let them openly but modestly avow what they believe to be important truth: and thus, if their conclusions are correct, they will communicate to others the light and peace which they themselves possess; and if they are mistaken, they are putting themselves into the best way of being set right.

Thirdly, Let them neither think nor speak evil of those who, having been equally faithful, have not been equally successful with themselves.

If any are mistaken, let error be corrected by calm address, by gentle language, by dispassionate reasoning, by scripture judiciously interpreted and properly applied: not by rude language, not by loud clamour, not by bitter reproach, and least of all by penal severities. All such things tend to create and confirm prejudice, to irritate the mind to opposition; but they can never enlighten the understanding, nor convince the judgment. Nor let them reject from christian fellowship any who are sincere in their inquiries, and who acknowledge Jesus as their master and Lord, how remote soever the result of their inquiries may be from the doctrines which are commonly received. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?

Finally, Let christians of all parties vie with each other in love and in good works.

Let each denomination be ambitious to manifest the superior excellence of its own creed, by the superior sanctity, benevolence, and active usefulness of its professors: and let them cordially unite with each other in promoting every scheme, the object and tendency of which is to abate human misery, to diminish human guilt, and to diffuse knowledge, virtue, and happiness through every class of society, and especially among the rising generation, upon which all depends. In this way, how widely soever they may be separated from each other by external distinctions and by party names, they will best approve themselves to be all one in Christ Jesus: the consistent disciples, the accepted followers, of one common Lord; and the honoured members of that happy and harmonious community "where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all."

THE END.

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AT THE

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ON THURSDAY, SEPT. 30, 1819.

Published at their Request, and respectfully inscribed to them.

BY REV. JOSEPH HUTTON, A. B.

OF LEEDS.

We must be "contented to await the slow operation of time, in extinguishing "prejudices which time alone has produced; conscious that bodies of men "are peculiarly tenacious of their habits of thinking, and that it is wisely "ordained that the conquest achieved by just and enlightened principles, "should be firm and durable in proportion to the tardiness of their pro-"gress."

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The Author of the following Discourse feels that he owes some apology to the friends who so kindly desired its publication, for not having complied more speedily with their wishes. He trusts that their candour will accept the only excuse that he can offer, though one, of the value and sufficiency of which his own assurance must be their sole pledge,—viz: the pressure of other engagements. Some inconsiderable additions, it will be found, have been made to the Discourse itself, with the view of rendering the argument more complete: and a few Notes have been subjoined, partly designed to obviate the objections of opponents, and partly to excite the attention of those readers, should there be any such, who have hitherto been unacquainted with Unitarianism, or prejudiced against it, to the general merits of a cause, which, the Author feels deeply convinced, is the cause of Truth and the Gospel; and which, therefore, in his opinion, must prosper, in exact proportion as it is seriously and diligently examined, and strictly and impartially tried by the only sure test of scripture. "To the law and to the testimony," he would say. May no opinions prevail, whether they be his own, or those of another, which cannot abide that ordeal!

Leeds, January 20th, 1820.

SERMON.

Mark xiii. 32.

"But of that day and that hour knoweth no one, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."

Amongst the many accusations which, to the great disgrace of their common profession, Christians of differing sects have been in the habit of heaping upon each other, none, I hope and believe, is more entirely groundless and unjust than that which ascribes to the maintainers of the strict personal unity of the Deity, a wish to degrade the character of the Son of God, and to depreciate the value of that salvation which he was sent into the world to bestow upon our frail and sinful race. There is not a single assignable motive which could possibly induce such a wish. What that character is in which the messenger of the Most High has really appeared, and what the true import of his message, it is equally the interest of all to ascertain; and to pay him honour due is a duty, which all owe alike to him that sent him.

Wilfully to offer the slightest indignity to the person of the ambassador, every one must know, is to offend the king. Wilfully to degrade the Son is to offer a direct insult to the Father. Where is the sect or society, I will not say of Christians, but of reasonable beings, that could be guilty of such gratuitous wickedness and folly—of rebellion against heaven, without even the chance of a miserable

recompense on earth? That such an accusation should be merited is impossible. That it should have been preferred is a lamentable proof of the force of prejudice and passion, even when opposed to the clearest dictates of the understanding and the best feelings of the heart. No, my Christian friends, whatever our opinions are, or whatever may be thought of them, our object, I trust, is good—our intentions, at least, are holy and pure: they are the same which we gladly ascribe to our fellow Christians, and believe to actuate every serious and conscientious member of every opposing sect. We follow after truth. The desire of our hearts is to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; to seek the Lord, in whom we live, and move, and have our being, if haply we may feel after him and find him; and to honour the Son in like manner, though, we honestly think, we dare not, in the same degree, as we honour the Father.

To detract from the dignity of him whom we call Lord and Master—to lessen him in the eyes of the world who loved us with perfect love, and laid down his life for us, a spotless and a willing sacrifice—to undervalue the great salvation that brings light, and life, and immortality to the remotest and darkest corners of the earth—to trample under foot the Son of God, and to count the blood of Jesus, which sealed the covenant, an unholy thing—far be such guilt and such ingratitude from our hearts. Firmly, yet temperately, we deny the imputation, and are ready, I trust, every one of us, to appeal, with humble confidence, for the sincerity and truth of that denial, to the God whom we adore, and to the Saviour whom, though we do not worship as God, we revere and love as the Son of God, and for the wealth of worlds would not wrong. If we deny any honour to our great Redeemer, it is only that which we humbly conceive he would himself have rejected as unfit for his acceptance—nay more, which we are persuaded that he did directly and explicitly reject. Far from designing to dishonour and degrade our master, we believe that we best comply with his wishes, and obey his will, when we distinguish between him and the Father who

sent him; when through him we pay to God the profoundest homage of the prostrate soul, and refuse even in thought to elevate to equal honours any other being.

Jesus himself, we feel convinced, would thus have acted, and would have shrunk, with undissembled horror, from the thought of assuming the place of Deity, or accepting even the semblance of that homage which he always paid himself, and taught his followers to pay to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. "Why callest thou me good?" were his own words to the lawyer who addressed him by the title of good master, "none is good but one—that is God."* "If ye loved me," said he on another occasion, "ye would rejoice because I said I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I."† And again, speaking of his departure from this world, he says, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing; verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you."‡ By such passages as these, which we cannot help deeming sufficiently clear and explicit, as well as by the general tenour of the discourses of Jesus, we think ourselves fully borne out in the belief that our conduct has the sanction and approbation of our blessed master himself, and that he who was meek and lowly of heart, will discern in our refusal of divine honours to his person, not a want of love and reverence for him—far from it—but, on the contrary, a strong desire to obey his precepts and follow his example; to serve the God whom he served in spirit and in truth; and to pay the homage of supreme veneration and love, where he declared it to be due, even to that Being whom he has pronounced greater than himself, and to whom, in the end of all things, an apostle expressly assures us, he shall resign his delegated power,—"delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and being subject to him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."§

No, my fellow Christians, if we refuse to Jesus the titles and honours of Deity, it is not because we do not

* Mark x. 17, 18. See Appendix Note A. † John xiv. 28. See Appen. Note B. ‡ John xvi. 23. § 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

love; it is not because we do not venerate him; for we do love him, as under God our dearest and best friend, as our Saviour that died for us; and we do venerate him as that beloved Son of God in whom the Father was well pleased, and solemnly declared that he was so: but it is because we dare not offer to Jesus homage, which, if we understand him aright, he has forbidden us to offer, and has declared that he will reject—we dare not call him God who claims only to be the Son of God, and who, in our sincere and deliberate opinion, would refuse to accept a higher title.

But our views, say those who differ from us, are erroneous, our scruples groundless, and our interpretations of scripture wrong. Suppose it were so—grant for a moment that we have been mistaken—What then? Are we therefore enemies to Christ and his cross? Because we have erred, must it therefore follow that we have wilfully and wickedly erred? Such may be the opinion of some well-meaning followers of Christ; but not such, I am persuaded, would be the decision of the great Master himself. Even whilst he corrected our errors, he would approve our adherence to the dictates of conscience; and would forgive our scruples and our heresies, how weak and ignorant soever, provided they were serious and sincere. Were it true that beneath the disguise of the servant and the son we had failed to discover the latent Deity, he would nevertheless pardon us if he found, that though his nearer presence was unperceived, that Deity was always loved and reverenced by us, and these feelings testified by the honourable reception of his supposed ambassador, and prompt attention to his will as soon as known.

Were a mighty monarch to assume the character of one of his own servants, and to travel in disguise to some distant corner of his kingdom, would he, I pray you, mark those of his subjects as rebellious and disloyal, who, though they deemed him far remote, nor dreamed of his presence with them, should yet speak of him with warm affection and unfeigned respect, and receive his will as law? Would he record it as a crime inexpiable if, through ignorance, they could not discover the person of the real monarch in

that of the apparent servant? Would he denounce vengeance against them because they did not render to the supposed messenger of majesty the homage due only to majesty itself? Would he not, on the contrary, be pleased to find that their loyalty had taught them to make a scrupulous distinction; to honour the servants of the king as such, but to reserve for the monarch himself, with watchful care and true allegiance, those higher honours which the monarch only has a right to claim? Assuredly it would be so, nor should we, for the case is exactly parallel, have the least ground to apprehend our Saviour's displeasure, even on the supposition that our sentiments were erroneous, and our conceptions of his person and dignity inadequate and defective.

For my own part, had I much less reason to be satisfied of the truth of my opinions than I feel persuaded that I have, I should not on this head entertain the slightest apprehension. I might fear that my inquiries had not been sufficiently diligent—that I had not searched the scriptures in the spirit and manner that I should have done; but I should entirely acquit myself, and I can truly assert that I could do so with a conviction of perfect sincerity, of the remotest approach to a wish to degrade, in the least degree, the character of my Saviour. Of such conduct, feeling myself incapable, and my feeling I trust is that of every one now before me, I should not fear to be accused even at the awful bar of the Searcher of Hearts; and compared with this, to be judged of man's judgment is indeed a very little thing.

Let us only be convinced, my brethren, on good grounds, that we love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity—let the test of that sincerity be our active and cheerful obedience to his will, our piety, our benevolence, our self-government, a conversation in short becoming the gospel of Christ—and be assured, our revered master will not count us enemies, though in that great day when truth alone shall stand, and all the vanities of human opinion shall shrink and disappear before the eye of the Omniscient as dew drops before the sun; though in that day, I say, it should be found that our peculiar opinions also have been

of the number of these vanities. Let us thus act—and the countenance whose light will purge our sins, and disperse our errors, and enlighten our darkness, will beam a look of love and mercy upon us: our fearful trembling souls shall be enlightened and purified, but fear not brethren—they shall live.

That which I hope and believe for myself, I hope and believe for all my Christian brethren, even for those who differ most widely from me. I deem them in error certainly, in gross error, in error which it is of material importance to the interests of Christianity and the Christian world to remove; but I do not therefore doubt their safety; I do not question their final acceptance with the Father—God forbid—I know, and my heart would be narrow indeed if I did not rejoice to know, that there are many burning and shining lights amongst them—many who are well prepared to meet the bridegroom—who are watching for the cry, "Behold he cometh"—whose lamps, ready trimmed, send up a bright and cheerful blaze—of whose oil it would be well if we could borrow. They may be in error; but what then? They are in charity—the love of God and man dwelleth richly in them—the law of Jesus is written on their hearts. God forbid that I should presume to try, by my petty scales of orthodoxy or heresy, call them which which you please, those who have been weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and not found wanting. A heart right with God, a conduct and a conscience void of offence, an unfeigned and active love of the Father, and of the brethren, these will far outweigh the most erroneous sentiments—these are the pure and solid gold, compared with which, a creed or a confession, whether mine or yours, is but a feather in the scale.

Let me quote, on this subject, the words of a late distinguished ornament of the established church, words which, in my humble opinion, ought to find a responsive echo in the heart of every real Christian. "It is difficult," says Bishop Watson, in the admirable preface to his collection of theological tracts, "for any man entirely to divest himself of prejudice, but he may surely take care

that it be not accompanied with an uncharitable propensity to stigmatize with reproachful appellations, those who cannot measure the rectitude of the Divine dispensations by his rule, nor seek their way by insisting on the path, which he, in his overweening wisdom, has arrogantly prescribed as the only one which can lead men thither. If different men, in carefully and conscientiously examining the scriptures, should arrive at different conclusions, even on points of the last importance; we trust that God, who alone knows what every man is capable of, will be merciful to him that is in error. We trust," he adds, with a generous candour which it grieves me to call singular, "that he will pardon the Unitarian if he be in error, because he has fallen into it from the dread of becoming an idolater, of giving that glory to another, which he conceives to be due to God alone. If the worshipper of Jesus Christ be in an error, we trust that God will pardon his mistake, because he has fallen into it from a dread of disobeying what he conceives to be revealed concerning the nature of the Son, or commanded concerning the honour to be given him. Both are actuated by the same principle—the fear of God; and though that principle impels them into different roads, it is our hope and belief, that if they add to their faith charity, they will meet in heaven." Beautiful and truly evangelic conclusion! yes, my friends, this is the gospel which we have preached unto you, and which we trust that you have believed.

Whilst however we strongly and earnestly maintain, on this and every other subject, the innocence of involuntary error; and, as occasion requires, are either willing to urge this doctrine as a plea for charity towards ourselves, or happy to employ it as a motive for charity towards our brethren; let us not be mistaken. Let it not be thought that any acknowledged, or lurking suspicion of the soundness of our faith is the source of our anxiety to prove this point.—No, my brethren, we too believe, as firmly as those who differ from us, and we think, upon surer and more solid grounds, that the truth is with us. We too are fully persuaded in our own minds—at least as much so as any persons can be, who make no pretensions to infallibility; but build

their faith, with prayers for divine assistance, upon scripture interpreted by reason. If we are anxious to prove that error when unintentional is innocent, it is not that we are fearful lest the charge of *error* should be brought home to us, but because we are desirous that, at all events, the charge of *uncharitableness* never should. We would not have it thought that we esteem and love our fellow Christians less, because their opinions are different from ours; nor, on the other hand, are we willing to forfeit their affection and regard, on the ground that our opinions are different from theirs.

We certainly do feel it an evil, a great and serious evil, to have the right hand of fellowship refused to us, and to be treated as aliens from the family of Jesus Christ. We are willing therefore, and even anxious, so far as a paramount regard to truth and honesty will permit, to soften the prejudices, and conciliate the good-will of our opponents. Consistently with that supreme, inviolable allegiance, which we owe to the Father of all, we would do much to secure the love and confidence of our brethren. If we cannot persuade them that our opinions are true, we shall rejoice, nevertheless, to convince them that they are innocent. If they will believe that we are in error, we will at least endeavour to prove to them, if possible, that our error is involuntary—that it is perfectly consistent with an unfeigned and fervent love of God, of Jesus Christ, and of our fellow-men—that it neither has its source, nor its issue in sin—that it need not therefore be a wall of separation, to divide us from those to whom we might otherwise be dear. It must not however, I repeat it, be supposed, when for the sake of that charity, for which honesty and virtue are the only sacrifice we cannot make, we argue thus, that we therefore entertain any serious doubts as to the truth of our sentiments, or mean to represent them as *merely innocent*. We believe them to be not merely innocent, but *true*, and it is with the view of establishing the truth of one of the leading tenets which distinguish us from the majority of our fellow-professors, that I have made choice of the words of my text, as affording matter for profitable reflection.

"Of that day and that hour," says our Saviour, "no one knoweth; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." In this clear and explicit declaration of our blessed Lord, we have, in my opinion, a direct and unanswerable confutation of the doctrine of those who would confer upon him a dignity to which he never aspired, and elevate him to an equality with that Being who alone knoweth the end from the beginning, and is absolutely perfect in knowledge and wisdom, as in power. Here we have a proof, which cannot be controverted, that the meek and lowly Jesus neither was, nor claimed to be, co-equal with the Father—that though he was one with him, in intimate communion and in love, the willing agent of his perfect will, in which sense he prayed that his disciples might be so likewise, he pretended not to a participation of the same infinite attributes, or the same essential nature; nor ever wished to assume a higher title than that of the Son of God, sent into the world with derived knowledge and delegated power.

The possession of one attribute at least essential to Deity, omniscience, is here expressly disclaimed. "Of that day and hour" says he, speaking, as most commentators suppose, of the day of judgment; or as some think,* (perhaps more agreeably to the context, though it matters not for our present argument,) of the precise time of the destruction of Jerusalem; "Of that day and hour knoweth no one; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father." From the lips of our Saviour himself then, we have the declaration, that there was a part of the divine plan of which he was ignorant; one day and hour at least, of those times and seasons which the Father had put in his own power, that it was not given to him to know. That single day or hour is abundantly sufficient for our argument. Ignorance of the minutest particular of the plan of providence, is as inconsistent with the nature of Deity, as ignorance of the whole. He could not

* See the Rev. Timothy Kenrick's Exposition, or Dr. Adam Clarke's commentary and notes on Matthew xxiv. and parallel passages.

be God, to whom every atom in the boundless immensity of space, and every moment in the endless duration of eternity, was not perfectly known.

And here we may observe, that while the smallest degree of ignorance, on any subject how trifling soever, must disprove, beyond contradiction, the Deity of him who confesses or discovers it; the possession, on the contrary, of stores of knowledge, inconceivable by any human imagination, fathomless by any human mind, boundless so far as such a mind can perceive, would not be in itself sufficient to establish the Godhead of the possessor. We may pronounce with certainty, that he is *not* God who is ignorant of any thing: but of him, who, to our finite comprehension, should appear to know all things, we could not therefore pronounce that he was God. Ignorance, we know, in the minutest quantity, cannot co-exist with omniscience: but there is no degree of knowledge, how wonderful soever, of which we can affirm that it could not be derived—of which we can assert that it is absolutely infinite, and can exist only in an infinite being. Where we clearly see a bound, we may infer a finite nature; but from our not perceiving a bound, we cannot infer an infinite.

To apply this remark to the subject under consideration, if it should appear that there was any part of the plan of providence of which Jesus was ignorant, the conclusion would be unavoidable, that, Jesus *is not* God, whereas the opposite conclusion, that he *is* so, would not follow from his appearing to possess the most perfect knowledge of all the subjects that the human imagination can conceive. The smallest degree of imperfection is sufficient to prove an imperfect nature. The highest degree of excellence that we can appreciate, will not prove perfection. What portion of knowledge, power, wisdom, and goodness, the supreme disposer may see fit to communicate to an inferior nature, we cannot determine; but we can determine with infallible certainty, that he who is in any respect deficient in these attributes cannot be the Supreme.*

Those of our fellow-christians, therefore, who main-

* See Appendix, note C.

tain, in the strict sense, the Deity of our Lord, are completely refuted by the passage before us, if we admit its obvious and literal meaning to be likewise the true one: nor can I conceive that it would be otherwise though it should appear, (which, I shall hereafter show, is very far from being the real state of the case) that there was no other passage, in the Christian scriptures, of similar import. They who maintain that Jesus Christ was perfect God, must surely mean, if words have meaning, that in his mind were concentred all the infinite attributes, and that his will could wield all the infinite powers of Deity. But what can more directly and clearly refute this supposition than our Saviour's express declaration, that there were, in the eternal counsels of the Father, a day and hour that he knew not—that were, in fact, hidden from him? Can we suppose, for a moment, that he who made this open declaration either regarded himself as the Omniscient One, or wished to be so regarded?

I am well aware, however, that the maintainers of the doctrine in question have made some attempts, I doubt not from the best and purest motives, to give this passage an interpretation corresponding with their general views. These attempts we are now to examine.

And, in the first place, it is said that when our blessed Lord imputes to himself imperfection, or any thing that implies it, we are to regard him as speaking, not of his divine, but of his human nature. As a human being, they say, he might be ignorant of many things, though as God he was omniscient. Jesus Christ, the man, might not know what Jesus Christ, the second person of the Godhead, did. Are we then to understand, we may ask in reply, that the divine and human nature, in the person of our Saviour, were perfectly distinct—so much so that there were subjects on which they held no communication, and were variously informed? Are we to understand that those same organs of speech, of which the divine nature made use at one time, to proclaim its omniscience, were employed by the human nature at another, to declare the imperfection of its knowledge? Are we to understand, in short, that two different beings, a perfect and an imperfect,

a finite and an infinite, occupied the same body; and spoke and acted, at different times, in a different and inconsistent manner? Is this the doctrine which we are required to receive as the doctrine of scripture?—and must we, at the same time, believe that these natures, thus distinct and unconnected, both in word and deed, were nevertheless so perfectly united as to form one indivisible person, one perfect deified man? Surely an opinion so monstrous, so made up of direct contradictions, cannot have the sanction of the word of truth. If the mind of Jesus was *one*, and this is not disputed, it could not, at the same time, have been informed and uninformed upon the same subject—the same idea could not, at the same moment, have been present to, and absent from it.

Our Lord's assertion is, that he *knew not* the day and hour. Shall we then suppose him to mean, that though he did know it *as* the Deity, he did not know it *as* a man; or, in other words, that the particular portion of his nature which was human was not the source of his knowledge? What is this but to ascribe to our blessed master words which, if explained by him, would have been found to contain nothing better, even upon the Trinitarian hypothesis, than a flat and unprofitable truism; and which, unexplained, could be regarded in no other light than as a mere equivocation. Let it be remembered, as a fair and legitimate, though I must think it will appear a startling consequence of this mode of interpretation—that our Lord might, consistently with his character and with truth, have denied in one place, in terms as strong and direct as he affirmed in another,—saying *I know*, one moment, and *I knew not*, as confidently the next,—his knowledge of the human heart, of the circumstances of his own approaching death, of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the general resurrection and judgment—in short of every thing which, as a mere man, he could not have known.* Those whose

* Upon the same principle, indeed, any inspired person might directly deny his knowledge of every subject on which he had been supernaturally instructed; since of all such subjects, if called upon for an explanation, he might safely affirm, however self-evident and nugatory the affirmation, that, as a *mere man*, he could know nothing of them.

minds revolt against such a theory and such a consequence, and who would not put an equivocation into the mouth of him who was "the truth," as well as "the way and the life," will probably agree with me, that Jesus would not have professed himself ignorant of that which he really knew, in any character or nature whatsoever, whether human or divine.

To suppose that the man, Christ Jesus, could, with truth and sincerity deny, what Jesus, the Divine Being, might, at the same time, have truly and sincerely affirmed, is certainly to suppose that the two natures were perfectly distinct; that there were subjects on which they did not communicate; and on which, therefore, the same mind was not employed to register their thoughts. It is to say, in short, that the words and actions of Jesus did not always flow from the same internal source—that though apparently he was not really one being, but that his outward and visible form was possessed and governed by two distinct regulating minds of opposite and inconsistent attributes. I think I may safely affirm that, amidst the multitude of opposing sects, there is not one that will pretend to maintain, upon scriptural grounds, such a doctrine as this.

The preceding remarks appear to me, I confess, quite conclusive against the interpretation in question. An additional argument, however, suggests itself, which may not be altogether undeserving of notice. It is derived from the bare consideration of the arrangement given to the words of my text, as they proceeded, according to the testimony of the evangelist, from our Saviour's lips. "Of that day and hour," said he, "knoweth no one, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Is it not obvious that a climax is here intended—that our Lord means to rise from the simple general affirmation that no one knew it, to the stronger and more definite assertion, that it was not revealed to the angels in heaven, and thence higher still to the declaration, that it was unknown even to the Son of God himself?

If this observation be just, is not the conclusion inevitable, that our Lord here speaks of himself, not in his

lowest, but in his highest character; in that character in which he was superior to all the children of men, and even to the highest angels of the presence—in which he was inferior to God only. Indeed the very use of the term "the Son," unaccompanied by any restrictive epithet, and immediately succeeded by that of "the Father," points directly to the same conclusion. Let it be carefully observed then, that Jesus, at the very same time that he professes his own ignorance of a day and an hour fixed in the counsels of Omniscience, ranks himself above the angels, and assumes his highest title, whatever be its import, that of "the Son." What more can be wanting to show the fallacy of the interpretation alluded to!—an interpretation which, though the words of the text should admit of it, neither reason nor scripture would justify; and which, though both reason and scripture should justify, the words of the text would not admit.

Such are the arguments, of the force of which you will judge, against the view which Trinitarian commentators *generally* give of this text—a view of it, however, with which I am happy to find a justly celebrated advocate of Trinitarian doctrine, candidly confessing that he has never felt himself satisfied. Another mode of explanation, which this genleman suggests as preferable, and the only other, on that side of the question, at all deserving of notice, with which I am acquainted, I am now to examine.

"It is plain," says Mr. Wardlaw, (I use his own words) "that if *angels* had known that day and that hour, it must have been *by communication*;—that if *men* had known it, it must also have been *by communication*. That neither man nor angel knew it, is equivalent to—that God had not communicated the knowledge of it to them. It is of *knowledge received by communication* that our Saviour speaks:—and as in passages before referred to, and in many others, he is represented, and represents himself, as sustaining an official character, and bearing a commission from the Father to men; the whole of the difficulty consists in considering him in Mark xiii. 32, as speaking of himself in this, his official capacity, and declaring that the time of

the judgment was not among the things *communicated to him* as the commissioned messenger of the Father;—that it was to remain *a divine secret.*" And in another place he says—" In this way the Son did not *know* the day of judgment. He knew it not in his official capacity, as the commissioned ambassador of heaven to men. It formed no part of the divine communications to him in this character." " This view," he adds, " has always appeared to me much more rational and satisfactory than that which is commonly given, that he was ignorant of it *in his human nature*, although he knew it in his *divine;*—a mode of explanation with which, I confess, I have never been well satisfied."

That the interpretation which this writer proposes to substitute for the more common and ancient one is ingenious, may, perhaps, be allowed, but that it is not by any means either " rational" or " satisfactory," I think a very little reflection will prove. " It is of *knowledge received by communication*," says Mr. Wardlaw, " that our Saviour speaks." This *assertion* contains, in fact, the whole jet of the argument, and this assertion may safely and confidently be denied. It is of knowledge generally that our Saviour speaks, without any perceptible reference, or trace of reference to the source from which it was derived. When our Saviour declares that the Father does know of that day and that hour, will it be asserted that he then speaks of " *knowledge received by communication?*" Assuredly not. Where then is the necessity or the propriety of supposing such a designed limitation in the other cases? In whatever sense God is said " to know" of that day and hour; in the same sense it is natural to suppose that men, and angels, and the Son are said " not to know" of it. But knowledge simply is what is affirmed of the Father, and this, therefore, there is every reason to believe, is what is denied of men, and angels, and the Son.

What, let us inquire, would be the result, should we, according to the tenor of the observations above quoted, introduce the words " by a divine communication," or " in an official capacity," into the sentence, as explanatory of the particular species of knowledge meant? " Of that

day and that hour knoweth no one, by divine communication, or in his official capacity, no, not the angels which are in heaven," (what, by the way, may I be allowed to ask, is *their* official capacity in this case?) "neither the Son, but the Father." Surely to read the passage thus, is abundantly sufficient to prove, that thus it cannot be understood. Who can suppose that it is by communication from another, or in a character merely official, that God is said to know the day of visitation? The word employed, I repeat it, denotes nothing more than simple knowledge—"Of that day and hour no one *knoweth*"—nor is there any thing in the sentence, or in the context, which can lead us for a moment to suppose, that it has any different meaning as applied to the Son, than when men, or angels, or the Father, are the subject of it.

It is the very same term which our Lord employs when he says, in a passage immediately connected with this, "Watch, therefore, for ye *know* not the day nor the hour;" and again, "If the good man of the house had *known* at what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through;"—in both of which it is evident that the argument is founded solely on the want of knowledge, without any consideration of the source from which it was to flow, or the mode of obtaining it. It would have made little difference, probably, in the conduct of the good man of the house, whether he had received notice of the intention of the thieves, from the testimony of his own senses, or "by communication from another;"—if he had "known" he would have "watched."

Had our Lord meant, as Mr. Wardlaw asserts, to say nothing more, than that it was not in his commission to reveal that day and hour, though he possessed a perfect knowledge of them, he might, surely, and would have chosen words far more significant of such a meaning, and less liable to misrepresentation. "Of that day and hour," he might have said, "knoweth no one, no, not the angels in heaven, but the Father and the Son—but it is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father

hath put in his own power."* No unprejudiced and candid critic, I am persuaded, will ever be able to extract from the passage before us, any other meaning than that which appears upon the very surface of it—viz. an ascription to the Father of knowledge withheld from every other being, even from the Son himself.

May I be allowed to conjecture that it is from a similar persuasion, or at least suspicion, that a learned Trinitarian commentator has lately proposed, doubtless as a last, and certainly a desperate resource, to expunge the offensive clause, "nor the Son," from the text, as a probable interpolation. For this proceeding, I have already hinted, there is no critical warrant whatever. Griesbach, the highest authority on such subjects, and not the less so on this point, as he was himself a Trinitarian, expressly assures us, that the words are found in all existing manuscripts and versions without exception; nor does he mention any contrary testimony, save that of Ambrose, who says that in his time some Greek copies existed which did not contain them. To the bare unsupported assertion of a Latin Father, of the fourth century, opposed to such an array of evidence, this great critic, of course, ascribes no weight.

It is true in the parallel passage in Matthew† the clause does not occur: this, however, it is almost needless to say, is no objection to its authenticity and genuineness in Mark; since every careful reader of the gospel narratives must have observed very numerous instances, in which the true but imperfect account of one evangelist, whether of an action or a speech, is not only confirmed, but extended and improved, by the fuller and more accurate detail of another. It is, in fact, in the particular circumstantial additions which each of the evangelists, from having enjoyed access to distinct sources of information, was enabled to make to the general story, that the separate value of their narratives in no small degree consists. Each supplies something that his brother historians have omitted to mention, while, in the great outline, they are all of

* See Appendix, Note D. † Matt. xxiv. 36.

them perfectly agreed, and corroborate each other's testimony. In the passage referred to in Matthew, however, as parallel to our text, though the words "nor the Son" are certainly omitted, we find a word added which will probably be regarded, by the attentive and candid reader, as nearly if not fully equivalent. "Of that day and hour," says our Lord, according to St. Matthew, "no one knoweth, no, not the angels in heaven, but the Father *only*." Must not the word "*only*" be regarded as indirectly excluding the Son, as well as angels and men? If so, St. Matthew and St. Mark perfectly harmonize, though the latter must be regarded as reporting our Lord's words with greater fulness and accuracy.

It appears, then, that there is not a particle of external critical evidence against the genuineness of our text. Every manuscript and version, of any value, contains it, and a parallel passage, in another evangelist, confirms and vindicates its testimony. What plea, then, can be urged for casting it out as an interpolation? Perhaps the learned commentator would say, for I have not yet had an opportunity of consulting his work,* that he is induced to do so, solely because the passage, as it stands, conveys a doctrine clearly contradicted and confuted by every other part of sacred scripture. The omniscience of Jesus, which this passage, if authentic, certainly disproves, he would perhaps assert to be the doctrine of all that remains of the New Testament. Were his supposed assertion correct, I do not hesitate to admit that his case would be a strong one. If the infinite knowledge of Jesus were indeed, without controversy, the doctrine, directly and distinctly laid down, of every other part of scripture, then would it be incontestably necessary to regard and treat as an evident interpolation an insulated passage so directly opposed to it. I confess, and I am not ignorant at the risk of what often repeated but unjust insinuations I do so, that were I a Trinitarian, convinced from serious examination that the Deity, and consequently the omniscience, of Jesus Christ,

* See Appendix, Note E.

was the doctrine of the whole New Testament besides, I should much rather choose to question the authority and genuineness of a single passage like that before us, from internal evidence, than attempt to distort it, by far fetched criticisms, from its obvious and only sense, and impose upon it meanings which it evidently will not and cannot admit.

The case, however, we shall probably find, upon examination, is very far indeed from being such as we have imagined, and as some conscientious and pious Christians may perhaps suppose. Laying aside all consideration of the text, and its parallel passage in Matthew, the doctrine of the infinite knowledge of our blessed Lord, to confine our attention to this single attribute of Deity, does not, I think, by any means, appear to be the doctrine of scripture. On the contrary, I am persuaded that the thoughtful and attentive, if likewise an unprejudiced reader of the New Testament, will find, no one or two, but *many* passages that directly militate against it, and *none* in which it is clearly and unquestionably asserted. To enter at length into this inquiry, and to say all, or nearly all, that might be said in defence of the opinion just advanced, neither my time, nor my regard for those upon whose patience I have already trespassed, will permit me; I shall therefore endeavour to comprise, in a few brief observations, designed rather to *suggest* than to *supply* matter for reflection, what I have to say on this head.

And, in the first place, it may be observed, we find in scripture many express declarations, proceeding from the lips of our Lord himself, that the knowledge which he possessed was not his own, but derived from him that sent him, from which, if admitted, it would seem to be an obvious and necessary inference, that he could not be the omniscient God. To instance a few of these, in the 5th chapter of St. John's gospel, and the 30th verse, we find these words ascribed to our Lord, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father who

hath sent me." In the 7th chapter of the same evangelist, the 14th and following verses, we read that "about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, how knoweth this man letters having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, my doctrine is not mine but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be *of God*, or whether I speak of *myself*. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him." In the 8th chapter, the 28th and 29th verses, we find our Lord thus addressing the Jews—"Then said Jesus unto them, when ye have lifted up the son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone, for I do always those things that please him." And afterwards, at the 40th verse, "But now ye seek to kill me, *a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God.*" In the 12th chapter, the 49th and 50th verses, we find our Lord expressing himself in the same manner, "I have not spoken of myself," says he, "but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." And once more, in the beautiful and solemn prayer which we find recorded in the 17th chapter of the same gospel, he thus addresses that Being from whom he always professed that all his knowledge and his power were derived. "Now," says he, speaking of his chosen followers, "now they have known that all things, whatsoever thou hast given me, are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."

These passages, and others that might be produced of similar import, will appear, I cannot help thinking, to the

candid and unprejudiced mind, perfectly irreconcileable with the doctrine of the omniscience and deity of Jesus Christ. I am not ignorant of the answer that will be returned. It will be said, I know, that the Son, though equal in nature and essence, assumed a character, and acted a part, as it were, in the economy of redemption, inferior to the Father; and that it is in this view only that he is said to be taught, instructed, commanded, sent by him. To all this it may be sufficient to reply, referring you with confidence to the New Testament, for the best and most satisfactory proofs of the justice of this opinion, that such an interpretation has no foundation whatsoever in the testimony of scripture. I cannot, indeed, for my own part, regard it in any other light than as a mere hypothesis, "the work of men's hands," framed to solve a fancied difficulty. The dramatic fiction thus supposed—the assumption of separate characters by the three parts or forms, persons or subsistences of the Godhead, appears to me,—and I would say it with all due respect for the many excellent persons who hold an opinion directly opposite, doubtless on grounds which they deem satisfactory,—not only contradictory to the unity, but inconsistent with the truth, unworthy of the dignity and wisdom, and altogether unsupported by the word of God.

In the scriptures, I think, we may look in vain, even for the rudiments,—for the bare outline of that *scheme* or *economy* which is so distinctly laid down, and so minutely described, in all its parts, by every modern champion of what is generally termed orthodoxy. We find nothing there, no, not a single text, as far as I can see, which speaks,—of an eternal three-fold distinction in the essence of Deity;—of the arrangement of an economy of redemption, agreed upon before all worlds, between the three distinct, yet substantially identical persons, alike infinite and divine, of the one infinite Godhead;—of the necessity of an infinite sacrifice, in the person of one of these, in order to atone for the sins of a finite and created being, against the infinite Triune Creator;—of the consequent voluntary condescension of the second divine person, and

his perfect union with a perfect man, in order to provide such a sacrifice. These doctrines, it is true, how mysterious soever we may deem them, and whatever contradictions they may appear to us to involve, we can nevertheless see distinctly laid down in almost every Trinitarian work, in commentaries, and sermons, and polemical tracts—in the writings of men, whose sincerity we cannot doubt, whose ingenuity and eloquence we may admire, and whose piety and virtue we must love and respect; but we cannot see them—for myself, I declare it seriously and deliberately, that I cannot perceive even a trace of them—where only we ought to be convinced by seeing them, *in the scriptures.** To me, therefore, and to all who think with me, they cannot serve, in the least degree, to explain or modify those clear, direct, and unambiguous passages, in which Jesus is spoken of, and speaks of himself, as an inferior being, instructed, commanded, sent by the Supreme.

I observe, in the second place, and upon similar grounds, that prayer is an act which it is impossible to suppose could be performed by a being, himself omniscient—himself God. We find our blessed Master frequently, nay constantly engaged in earnest prayer to his heavenly Father; using the same language, and assuming the same devout and lowly attitude, as the rest of our feeble species; bowing down his body, and lifting up his eyes to heaven, while he calls upon the Most High; indicating, in short, by every outward sign, that he regarded the object of his worship not only as distinct from himself, but infinitely superior. Is it possible for us to imagine, when we see him thus engaged, thus prostrate, that he was nevertheless the supreme omniscient God? If we could think so, must we not suppose that his prayers too, as well as his expressions of inferiority and dependence, are to be explained by the intervention of the gratuitous hypothesis before alluded to;—that he is to be regarded as praying, not from himself, as the Son of God, but merely in his

* See Appendix, Note F.

"official capacity," as our Saviour and exemplar? But is not such a supposition as derogatory from that character of infinite truth which we ascribe to our heavenly Father, as it is without warrant from his word?

Surely if Jehovah were to descend on earth, and bear a human form, with awe and reverence be it spoken, we should discover, in every action and gesture, the matchless dignity of Him who has no equal—"the port of that Eternal Majesty that weighed the world's foundations." He might meditate, in secret, on his own perfections;—he might review those wondrous thoughts of love and mercy which, stretching through the vast infinities of space and time, sustain and bless all worlds;—but he could not bow down his head like a creature—he could not pray like one of those frail, finite, and dependent beings, to whom "time and chance happen," and by whom their issues are unknown.

The very act of prayer necessarily implies, in him that prays, an acknowledged limitation both of knowledge and of power. When our Lord offers up the earnest petition, that "if it be possible the cup may be taken from him,"* we must either conclude that he speaks the language of fiction, assuming a character lower than his own, *praying in character!* or we must relinquish altogether our belief in his omniscience. "*If it be possible*"—is not the language of him by whom all future as all past events are known, both in their causes and their consequences. As a finite being our blessed Lord might think it possible, in the hour of bitter anguish, that he who spared the son of Abraham, and "provided himself" another burnt-offering, in the place of that more precious one which he had first required—He, to whom "all things are possible,"† might listen to his earnest but humble prayer; accept the resigned spirit and the patient will to suffer, for the deed; and remove the bitter cup, from the perfect knowledge that, if offered, it would be drained to the very dregs. Such might have been the transient thought, the momentary hope, of

* Matt. xxvi. 39. † Mark xiv. 36.

a being of finite nature and imperfect knowledge: but no such hope or thought could have dwelt, even for a moment, in the breast of Omniscience, to whom the future must have appeared as irrevocably fixed and certain as the past. The prayers of Jesus, then, appear to me to afford a proof, as convincing as the most direct assurances could do, that he neither was nor desired to be thought omniscient.*

But thirdly, our Lord, we are told, "was tempted at all points as we are, and yet without sin." Does not temptation, I would ask, necessarily imply the limited knowledge of the person tempted? To an omniscient mind, at every moment perfectly informed of the precise nature and properties of every object—of the exact tenor and final issue of every event, all partial views of interest and pleasure, all doubt and indecision as to the true grounds of preference, and therefore, in my mind, all temptation must be absolutely impossible. Temptation evidently implies the existence of some fancied ground of desire, for that which is really and truly undesirable,—at the very least a momentary attraction to the wrong,—a suspension of mind, however transient, between an apparent and a real, a finite and an infinite good. But to an omniscient being this can never be, since to him real and apparent must be the same, and finite must appear to be lost in infinite. By his mind every thing must be seen in its true light, evil as evil, good as good. The future, to him, is the present. The remotest consequences of actions stand, in his view, immediately connected with their sources. In him, therefore, to will, or to desire wrongly, would be an infinite folly, which to ascribe to him would be infinitely absurd. "God cannot be tempted of evil," and consequently he cannot resist temptation. How then could he be God, who was tempted at all points as we are, and to whose praise it is recorded, that though tempted, he was yet without sin.

Not to be tempted, is a glory peculiar to the Creator. To be tempted, and to resist, is the glory of the creature:

* See Appendix, Note G.

and even this he may exchange for a yet higher one—the glory of being tempted no longer by that which tempted him before. In proportion as the joys of eternity are realized, by frequent devout contemplation, to the good man's mind, he looks on those of time "with undesiring eyes." In what degree soever this is the case, his contest is ended—his struggle is over—he is no longer tempted—he has risen above temptation. Could we suppose it completely so; could we suppose God in all his glories, and eternity with all its awful realities, actually revealed and perfectly realized to his conceptions;—could we, in other words, suppose him *omniscient;* then indeed for him there *would* be no temptation: time, in his view, would have passed into eternity: God would be seen in all things, and all in God.

But Jesus *was tempted*, though, supported by God, he did not yield: his ear was enticed by the song of the siren, though his heart firmly refused to listen: he heard the invitation at least, though with virtue superior to all the children of men, he turned not aside one single step from his way: he contended for a little, though he was speedily victorious. The conclusion, in my mind, is irresistible, that Jesus was not omniscient. Omniscience could not have been tempted: to omniscience the siren's song would, from the first moment, have been perfect discord: omniscience could have seen no enemy,—could have fought no battle,—and could, therefore, have gained no victory.

"If thou be the Son of God," said the tempter, "command that these stones be made bread." The suffering child of mortality, the man of sorrows who had not where to lay his head, the partaker of all our wants and woes, might, as such, have been tempted for a moment to employ his miraculous powers in ministering to his own necessities. In him it might have been virtue, high and exalted virtue, feeling that he could have acted otherwise, to pursue his rugged path regardless of himself,—to refuse to convert the stones that strewed it into the means of sustenance and comfort,—to choose rather to live upon the

words that proceeded from his Father's mouth,—and to regard the performance of his Father's work, and the completion of his will, in the most distressing circumstances of privation and pain, as meat and drink sufficient for him. To a human being, "in all things made like unto his brethren," the temptation might have been great; but what could it have been to one who felt himself essentially united with the very source of life; who was living, as it were, at the same moment, in the past, the present, and the future; who was feeding on those thoughts that must give to all other food the power to nourish and sustain; who was actually, not figuratively, one with that great First Cause in whom all creatures live, and move, and have their being? Is it possible to suppose that the human nature, thus pervaded and supported by the divine, not to say identified with it, could yet feel our wants, and even entertain the passing thought of supplying them in a manner inconsistent with perfect rectitude of will?

"If thou be the Son of God," said the tempter, a second time, to Jesus, as he stood on the pinnacle of the temple, "cast thyself down: for it is written he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' To a child of earth, entrusted with powers from above, the thought might perhaps have occurred of making a needless but magnificent display of them, and illustrating the extent of his authority by a use of it, calculated rather to attract attention and confer honour upon himself, than to accomplish the great object for which it was bestowed. Such an one might perhaps have felt a momentary desire to grant the astonished multitudes that sign from heaven which they afterwards so frequently requested; and by the same power which could heal the sick, and raise the dead, and work hourly miracles of love and mercy, to descend through the air, upborne by angels, from the highest pinnacle of the temple. In a mere finite being it might have been virtue to resist the thought that would have prompted a vain and needless

display,—to suppress every movement of self-love, every rising desire of personal distinction and public applause,—and to cherish that unaffected modesty and lowliness of spirit, which always led our Lord and Master to prefer usefulness to fame, and his Father's glory to his own; teaching him, even when he *was* to triumph, to choose the meek and lowly triumph of humility,—still to decline the wings of angels, and to select, for his solemn entrance into the holy city, the humble conveyance of the young ass's colt. In "the man Christ Jesus," this might indeed have been virtue. But where, let me ask, would have been the temptation, and where, consequently, the conquest over it, to an infinite and omniscient being? Is it credible that such a being could have felt the slightest inducement, either from motives of self-aggrandizement or self-preservation, to employ his boundless powers in any other than the wisest and the fittest way? Could he, who was in closest union with the Godhead—who was God, have ever wished for any greater safety, or sought for any brighter glory, than a single glance upon himself must have proved to be essentially his own?

The promise of temporal power, even of all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, was the third temptation. To a finite creature—to a human being, that promise might doubtless have appeared great and dazzling. By such, alas! the favour of God, and the happiness of heaven, are often sacrificed for a much smaller price. But what could it have been to Him whose eye had traversed the infinite of space;—who, from the height of his own mind, infinitely higher than that mountain-summit to which the tempter ignorantly carried him, had beheld, not all the kingdoms of the world, but all the worlds of the universe, and the glories of them;—before whom they stood revealed at the very moment;—and who felt himself in essential union with their infinite possessor? Surely no finite temporal authority, if we could suppose such an offer made to him who was already Lord of all, could have been the slightest temptation to omniscience and omnipotence com-

bined. From his lips there might have been eternal truth, but there could not have been human virtue, in the answer, —"Get thee hence, thou adversary, for it is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." But Jesus, we are told, was tempted at all points *like as we are*. This alone seems to me to prove, beyond all doubt, that Jesus was not omniscient.*

I observe, in the last place, and I shall merely observe, that all those passages of scripture, which imply the limitation of any other of the attributes of Jesus, will also imply that of his knowledge. He who was not infinite in *all*, could not have been so in *any*. Thus all the evidence which the scriptures contain, of the undivided personal unity of the Godhead—of the inferiority of the Son to the Father,—all the evidence, in short, that Unitarianism is the doctrine of the gospel, will bear upon the point now under consideration, and by establishing the inference derived from our text, contribute, so far as the internal evidence is concerned, to vindicate its authenticity. Our text, then, is authentic; there is neither external evidence nor internal, to warrant its rejection; and if admitted, it clearly inculcates, we have endeavoured to show, that important and leading doctrine of the gospel for which, as Unitarians, with sincerity and earnestness, yet with meekness and charity, we think it our duty to contend.

What remains then, my Christian friends, but that you be exhorted not to receive, without examination, my opinions, or those of any other man, or body of men, but like the noble Bereans, "to search the scriptures daily whether these things be so." It is possible that I, and those who think with me, notwithstanding our firm conviction to the contrary, may yet be wrong, if not on all points, at least on some. To the credit of sincerity we lay strong claim—a claim which we think that no one has a right to question without proof: but to infallibility we make no pretension. We do not therefore refuse, but, on the contrary, invite

* See Appendix, Note H.

the most impartial and rigid scrutiny into our opinions, and the grounds of them. If you think that we are wrong, we only say, prove that we are so, and we shall be happy to relinquish our errors; nor will any false shame, we trust, forbid us to acknowledge them frankly, and to thank you cordially for having pointed them out.

Be it always ours, my brethren, to seek the truth with diligence, to hold it fast, when found, with modest firmness, to profess it with charity, and to defend it with meekness. Finally, let us implore the Father of lights, and the giver of wisdom, to guide and assist our inquiries, and, above all, to direct and sanctify them to their only valuable end,—the attainment of a more fervent piety, a more extensive benevolence, a deeper humility, a stricter self-government; in one word, a daily growing conformity to the pure and perfect example of that beloved Son of God, in whom we recognize, revere, and love the brightest human resemblance, the express moral image of the Father.

Let not, my Trinitarian brethren, if there be any such that hear me, be surprised—these were my words;—I said *revere and love*. We trust that we do *revere* the Lord Jesus, as the appointed head over all things to his church, our Lord and Master, and our future Judge. We trust that we can truly say, in the words of the apostle,—"Him, having not seen, we *love*." Dear to our hearts, assuredly most dear, if we are what we profess ourselves, is that good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep.—We, with our fellow Christians, delight to cherish his remembrance:—we pray that nothing may have power to separate us from his love:—our warmest hope is, that we may be found worthy to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory:—we look and long for his salvation:—we implore every spiritual blessing through his name:—and through him, the beloved Son of the Father, we ascribe to God, only wise and good, most high, most holy, and most merciful, supreme over all:—even to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, everlasting praises. AMEN.

APPENDIX.

Note A. Page 7.

"WHY callest thou me good, &c." This passage has always been regarded by Unitarians as containing a striking and unanswerable vindication—the more so as it proceeds immediately from our Saviour himself—of the justice of their views: and even some of their opponents have been known to concede the difficulty of reconciling it with the Trinitarian hypothesis. Mr. Wardlaw, of Glasgow, however, has lately proposed two interpretations, either of which, for he does not profess to decide between them, he deems perfectly consistent with the supposition of our Lord's divine nature. On each of these,—since Mr. Yates has not, as far as I can recollect, particularly noticed this passage of Mr. Wardlaw's work, in his summary, but truly excellent and satisfactory reply; it may not be useless for an humbler champion of the cause to offer a few observations. The fortress, I am convinced, can never be taken from us, but we must not, on that account, allow the enemy to deceive others into the false persuasion, that his colours are flying on the ramparts, or that he has a two-edged sword against which those who defend them cannot possibly stand.

With respect to the first, then, of Mr. Wardlaw's two views, —we may conceive, he observes, "that our Lord framed his reply according to the ideas which he knew that the person, by whom he was addressed, entertained concerning him." For, "there is no reason," he adds, "to suppose that this ruler viewed our Lord as any thing more than a mere man,—a prophet,—a teacher sent from God. Considered in this light, the words of Christ convey a severe and pointed reproof to those who affected such titles of flattery, and sought the honour that cometh from men." Granting most readily the justice of Mr. Wardlaw's observation as to the view which the young man probably took of our Saviour's person and character, what, let us inquire, upon his own hypothesis, is the amount of this interpretation?

"Our Lord is to be regarded as framing his reply according to the views of the person addressing him"—in other words, he was well aware that this person's ideas of his nature and character were altogether inadequate and defective, and yet purposely framed his reply in such a manner as to confirm him, and those who were with him, and all, to this day, by whom the narrative of the transaction is read, in the belief that they were not so. He knew that he was himself God, and that the title of good, in its very highest sense, was therefore justly his, and yet, according to this interpretation, sent the young man away with the impression,—an impression too, which no words could have been better calculated than our Saviour's to convey,—that in giving him that title he had acted wrongly; that it was one which, in the highest sense at least, our Saviour did not claim; that he ought rather to have reserved it for a greater being; and that if he had not incurred the displeasure of our Lord by an apparent act of flattery; he had, to say the very least, addressed him with an appellation which his modesty (and modesty, where it is genuine, is always founded in self-knowledge) would not allow him to accept. Is it likely, I would ask Mr. Wardlaw, that our Saviour in reproving one error, would have laid the foundation of another, and that too according to Mr. Wardlaw's own hypothesis, of infinitely greater consequence? Could he not, if he had so desired, without disclaiming or appearing to disclaim the epithet in question, have condemned the motive from which it was given? I cannot think that our Lord would have been induced by any motive whatsoever to compromise his own dignity; or so far to accommodate himself to the erroneous views of another, as to frame by them an answer directly calculated to convey a false idea of himself.

I proceed to Mr. Wardlaw's second interpretation, according to which we are to consider our Lord "as *inquiring the views of this young man*, with regard to him whom he so respectfully accosted, kneeling to him, with an apparently humble acknowledgment of his superior dignity and authority."—"The reply will then be," says Mr. Wardlaw, "as if Jesus had said to him:—Why callest thou me good? None is absolutely good but one, that is God. Do you mean by your address to ascribe this goodness to me?—to acknowledge and honour me in my divine character? I and my Father are one. Dost thou believe this? or is your salutation a mere title of flattering courtesy,

to be understood as when addressed to your own Rabbies?" This is certainly ingenious, but I hardly think that even Mr. Wardlaw himself, upon second thoughts, will claim for it any higher praise. The able writer could not surely have forgotten, when he penned this passage, what he had distinctly stated more than once in the preceding page, and even in the paragraph immediately previous; viz.—that there was nothing in the title itself, which, "from its general use in application to men, could be understood as expressing any thing beyond mere humanity:" and that "there is no reason to suppose, that this ruler viewed our Lord as any thing more than a mere man,—a prophet,—a teacher sent from God." How then is it that Mr. Wardlaw puts into our Saviour's mouth a question which, upon his own supposition, was perfectly uncalled for, and could not have been understood by the person to whom it was addressed? The young man, according to Mr. Wardlaw, having no knowledge whatsoever of our Saviour's divine nature, and evidently regarding him in no other light than as a prophet or teacher divinely commissioned, addresses him as such by the title of "good teacher," a title neither implying, nor seeming to imply, "any thing beyond mere humanity,"—and how does our Lord answer? Why, by a serious inquiry into his views in thus addressing him,—by asking him, without the least real or apparent reason for the supposition, whether he meant by the appellation "to acknowledge and honour him in his Divine character," and to recognise him as the incarnate God himself,—for such we are to conceive is the hidden meaning of the simple question, "why callest thou me good?" Is it credible that our Lord would have addressed a question of this kind to a mind altogether unprepared to understand, and therefore to answer it? and even on the supposition that he could have done so, how will Mr. Wardlaw account for his neither demanding nor waiting for a reply? Pilate, indeed, asked "what is truth?" and went out without waiting for an answer, but we cannot suppose that the questions of Jesus were thus entirely devoid of an object.

But perhaps Mr. Wardlaw will say, that this inquiry, after all, was not meant to *inquire* but to *suggest*—that it was in truth a hint in the interrogative form, designed merely to intimate the true view in which the epithet "*good*" might, with the most perfect propriety and justice, have been applied to our Saviour. If so, it is at least very evident that the young man did not under-

stand the suggestion, since we find him not only going away sorrowful at the close; but also, in the course of the conference, when he again addressed our Lord, omitting the word "*good*," and stiling him simply "teacher." Nor indeed will it appear very wonderful that a hint so dark and mysterious should have eluded his comprehension, when we consider that even now, to the great majority of readers, not to say all, the words appear to convey a directly opposite meaning; and that even Mr. Wardlaw himself, after noticing "the folly of pretending that there are none of the passages brought forward by Unitarians that present *any* difficulty," frankly and honourably confesses, that "he is not aware of any passage produced on the Unitarian side of the alternative, that has greater plausibility in it than this."

Mr. Wardlaw intimates in conclusion, that a third interpretation of this passage might be generated by the combination of the two above stated and examined. What this might be I find myself unable to conjecture, and cannot therefore say how far it might prove more or less satisfactory than its component parts. I think, however, we may safely pronounce that unless the qualities of both, as in some chemical combinations, be altogether changed by their union, the result will not be such as to satisfy any serious and dispassionate inquirer.

With a few words on what appears to me the real meaning of the passage in question I hasten to conclude this note. It appears, I think, from all the circumstances of this story, that the dispositions of the youthful subject of it were naturally amiable,—that he was strongly impressed with the dignity of our Lord's character and the divinity of his mission,—and that consequently he was sincere in the expression of that profound respect which both the matter and the manner of his address seem to imply. Thus much, I think, we are warranted to conclude, not only from what he says of himself, and from the sorrow with which he departed, when he found that a sacrifice was required of him, which he had not the virtuous resolution to make, but also from that feeling of kind regard which Jesus is said to have entertained towards him—"then, Jesus beholding him," says the Evangelist, "loved him." "Good Master," said he, running, and kneeling to Jesus, "what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" Our Lord kindly hastens to answer his inquiry, but not before he had gently reminded him, with that modesty which always accom-

panies true greatness, that he had expressed his feelings of respect for a creature in too strong a manner, and by a term which might better, and with stricter truth, have been applied to the Creator. "Why callest thou me good," says he,—and we may imagine him, at the same time, raising the young man from his knees,—"why callest thou me good?—there is none good but one, that is God." I shall leave it to the reader to choose between these different expositions, with one other remark, and that is, that Mr. Wardlaw is mistaken when he supposes that Unitarians mean to represent our Lord, in this passage, as *directly disclaiming* equality with God. I, for one, most readily grant, that no such equality was ascribed even in thought, and that there could be no reason therefore formally to disclaim it. What we *do maintain*, and strenuously too, is this, that our Lord, on this occasion, declined the homage offered to him, in terms which he neither would, nor could have employed, had he been, as Trinitarians represent, the incarnate Deity: in terms which, if they do not directly disclaim equality with God, contain, nevertheless, a positive and irresistible proof, that if such equality had been ascribed, he would have directly disclaimed it.

NOTE B. PAGE 7.

"If ye loved me ye would rejoice, &c."] Having quoted this passage as decisive of our Lord's inferiority to the Father, I cannot forbear offering a few remarks on some observations which it has suggested to Mr. Wardlaw.* "It may sound strangely," says that ingenious writer,—and in this introductory observation at least I have little doubt that he will find many to agree with him,—"to speak of these words as a proof that he who used them was more than man, and more than a *creature*. Yet," he continues, "my mind is not a little impressed with the improbability of a mere human prophet, or even a superangelic messenger, assuring his fellow-men, or his fellow-creatures, as of a thing of which they needed to be informed, that *God was greater than he*;—that he was inferior *to the infinite Jehovah*. We can hardly, I think, suppose a mere prophet, a good man, or any holy creature, to bring himself thus into comparison with

* See Wardlaw's Unitarianism incapable of Vindication, Page 343.

his Creator and his God, &c." To all this the reply is obvious, that these sentiments, how just soever in themselves, will not, in the present instance, admit of any application to the passage in question. There is no reason whatever to suppose, that our Lord intended to bring himself into any species of direct and formal comparison, either as to nature or *office*, or any thing else, "with his Creator and his God." No such comparison was instituted by him. His object evidently was, not to inform his disciples of a truth of which they were ignorant, but to recall to their memories, and bring home to their hearts, a *well-known* truth, as a powerful source of consolation, in the prospect of their approaching separation from a Master whom they loved. He does not mention it as a fact "of which they needed to be informed," that his Father was greater than he; but he exhorts them to be comforted by the cheering recollection that he was so. His words are not, "I tell you that my Father is greater than I;" but "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice that I go unto the Father: *because* my Father is greater than I." Has Mr. Wardlaw never thought it right to remind the sorrow-stricken mourner, the bereaved parent, widow, orphan, or friend, that the departed object of their fond affection, so bitterly—so vainly mourned, was in better hands than theirs; the member of a more blessed society; the inhabitant of a far happier country? or has he been deterred from the use of such an argument, and the application of so powerful a lenitive, by the dread of appearing to institute an impious comparison between the creature and the Creator,—between the fading joys of earth and the unfading bliss of heaven? Has he never, in throwing himself and those whom he loved, upon the Divine mercy, expressed the deep conviction of his heart, that the supreme Disposer was the best disposer of their lot, knowing what was good for them far better than they could do themselves? Has he never addressed the penitent confession of secret or presumptuous sin, to Him who is "greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things"? In the answer to these questions, I cannot doubt that I shall have a sufficient answer to his argument on this passage. Had the words—"*My Father is greater than I*"—appeared as a detached and insulated proposition, there might then, I admit, have been some plausibility in Mr. Wardlaw's observations, but as the case actually stands, every candid reader, I think, will allow that there is not the smallest foundation for them. With respect to the

use which Mr. Wardlaw has made, on this occasion, of his favourite solvent for Unitarian texts, viz. the hypothesis that our Lord speaks of an inferiority on his part merely official,—where, I would only ask,—even upon the inadmissible supposition that the chosen followers of Jesus were as well acquainted as modern theologians with the doctrine of his two fold nature, and official subservience,—where, even then, would have been that rational and solid ground of consolation, which his words were evidently intended to suggest? "If ye loved me ye would rejoice."—Why? "Because I go unto my Father who, though not *essentially*, is yet *officially* greater than I, and therefore able and willing to reward me." Surely to *state* such a gloss upon the text is to *refute* it.

NOTE C. PAGE 14.

The observations to which this note is now subjoined seem to me to contain, by anticipation, a satisfactory and sufficient answer, to those arguments for the omniscience of our Lord, which Mr. Wardlaw endeavours to derive from his judicial character. The degree of knowledge which that being must possess who is to discharge the duties of righteous judge of the whole earth, to our narrow view, it may be granted, has scarcely a visible termination; nor is it by any means surprising that, with faculties so limited as ours, we should find it difficult to conceive, how knowledge so astonishingly comprehensive and minute, so "high and wonderful," can be communicated to a finite being. To pronounce absolutely however that this is impossible, if it be not "to be wise above what is written," is surely to discover no small degree of weakness and presumption Our planet with the system of which it makes a part, large as it may appear to the five or six-foot beings that traverse its surface, is, after all, little more than a drop in the boundless ocean of infinite space, —a single grain to the sands of that ocean could we suppose it circled with a shore. What folly then to assert that the knowledge of this single planet, or even system in all its parts, necessarily implies omniscience, and could not possibly be communicated, should the Creator so desire, to one of his creatures! Is not this to assign a limit to one attribute of Deity, under the pretext of magnifying another—to set bounds to the *omnipotence*,

in the vain idea of exalting thereby the *omniscience* of God? Who shall pretend to determine what degree of knowledge, or wisdom, or power, short of infinite, God can or cannot communicate to a created being? Who shall say to him, who, in the opinion of some philosophers, could compress the matter of worlds into the compass of a nut-shell, "Thus much shalt thou impart and no more"?

Whatever might be the view which the apostle Paul took of the nature and personal attributes of our Lord, he did not seem to be aware that he was uttering any incomprehensible enigma, any unintelligible mystery, when he communicated to his audience at Athens the important information, that "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by *that man* whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* Whatever he might think or know himself, we have, certainly, no reason to suppose that his audience were informed of the union of two natures in the person of Jesus, and yet we do not find him anticipating any objections on their part to the doctrine of a human judge; on the contrary, his opinion is distinctly given, that of the truth of that doctrine, the single fact of our Lord's resurrection ought to be, to all men, a sufficient assurance. Had any difficulty of the kind been expressed or suggested, I cannot doubt that the declared will and appointment of that Almighty Being, who could raise from the dead the crucified Jesus, would, in the apostle's esteem, have afforded a solution that ought to satisfy every mind.

I am not disposed to draw hasty conclusions from unguarded assertions, nor do I seriously think that, if Mr. Wardlaw had been at that time one of St. Paul's audience, he too would have been amongst the mockers, yet is there not some difficulty in conceiving how, with his views, he could have animadverted with any degree of severity on their conduct, since it is of that very doctrine, which they must have understood Paul to preach, that he has expressed himself with the most unsparing censure, if not contempt? To them at least Paul must certainly have appeared to speak of a *human judge*. But, says Mr. Wardlaw, employing the words of Mr. Yates on another

* Acts, xvii. 31.

occasion, to convey his own ideas on this, "If it be not certain that such a doctrine is false, there is no certainty on any subject. It is vain to call it a mystery. It is an absurdity, it is an impossibility." And again, in another passage where his own expressions are hardly less strong, "The supposition of a *mere man like ourselves*,* executing the office of universal judge, is one so monstrous, so contradictory to every idea we can form of what is *fit*, and *reasonable*, and *possible*, as to require for its admission a larger portion of credulity than that which Mr. Belsham and his friends affect to despise. The difficulty is not removed by the supposition of any powers however enlarged, in whatever way acquired, whether gradually or by communication, for the purpose, if they are still powers, as they must be, limited to the capacity of a being *merely human*.† I should even apply the same remark to the most exalted of created natures." Some of the Athenian hearers mocked, we are told, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead;—does Mr. Wardlaw think that they would have been more excusable, if the doctrine of a *delegated human judge* had been the subject of their contemptuous incredulity? From the preceding passages one might almost suppose that such was his opinion.

But delegation," it is observed, "cannot confer any ability for the discharge of the functions of the office delegated—it may bestow title and right; but it can communicate no capacity, no actual *qualification*." Granted at once. No reasonable being

* I take it for granted that these words in Italics are to be regarded, as nothing more than a periphrasis for *man*, considered as a created and dependent being, and consequently that they are not meant to exclude any enlargement of which the human mind is capable, or any communications, how extensive soever, of knowledge, wisdom, and power, which God may see fit to bestow; otherwise there is no sect of Christians in existence to whom Mr. W.'s observations will apply. Query, whether Mr. W. may not have been led to the use of this periphrasis by his recollection of that prophetic description of our Lord which the apostle Peter in one of his earliest discourses, after the communication of the Holy Spirit, quotes from the great prophet and lawgiver of the Jews.—"For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, *of your brethren, like unto me*"?

† By what means has Mr. W. been able to ascertain the exact limits of the human capacity, and to determine the precise degree of knowledge to which, in the progress to perfection, a human being by God's assistance may attain, and beyond which he cannot possibly proceed?

ever did or could seriously maintain the contrary: though human princes and governors, in the choice of their representatives, and agents, may have sometimes perhaps seemed to act upon the opposite hypothesis. Granted:—but let Mr. Wardlaw remember, that the question in this case is,—not what *delegation*,—but what *He who delegates* can or cannot perform. Will he venture to come forward, and state it distinctly as his belief, that the Omnipotent God himself cannot communicate, to any inferior nature, that degree of knowledge and power, which the final judge of the human race, in the sense in which that term is applied to our Saviour, must be supposed to possess? Can he point out the contradiction which the opposite supposition implies? Can he *prove* that "omniscience, omnipotence, and independence" are essential to "that man by whom God hath ordained that he will judge the world in righteousness?" Can he reply to that modest, serious, and sensible paragraph of Mr. Yates's work,* parts of which it appears, (though for what good reason does not appear,) have forced a smile from Mr. Wardlaw; but whose general effect, as he justly observes, ought rather to be, "to settle both mind and countenance in the gravity of serious thought?" If he will not venture in direct terms to make so bold an assertion,—if he cannot point out the contradiction involved in the idea of a created and delegated judge,—if he cannot confute the reasonings of that sober and sensible paragraph,—how shall he justify those strong expressions which, to say the very least, *seem* to assign a limit to one of the attributes of the Almighty?

Were I fond of argumenta ad hominem on serious subjects, I might perhaps be tempted to ask, though without any particular reference to Mr. W. with whose views on this subject I am not acquainted, how it is that persons who believe in the existence of a malignant being, of the most extensive powers, and so far as this globe is concerned, of almost absolute ubiquity,—of an indweller and corrupter, if not a searcher of hearts,—of a created author of sin and misery,—should yet find so much difficulty in conceiving the existence of a created son of God, invested by him, for the wisest and most benevolent purposes, with power and authority to administer justice and judgment in his name, amongst the children of men. "But is it possible," it is asked,

* See Yates's Vindication of Unitarianism, pp. 219, 220; and Wardlaw's Answer, pp. 238, 239.

"that such knowledge can belong to any being, and that being not be God?" Had the question been put in a somewhat different form, the proposer might not perhaps have found it so easy to answer it to his satisfaction. If the inquiry had been—"Has God himself the power to communicate such knowledge to any creature?" I question whether he could have so readily summoned up resolution to answer—no.

"But," says Mr. Wardlaw, "when we infer from the works of creation which we see, that their Maker is *infinite in wisdom*, our *data* are *limited*, yet our inference is *unlimited*. Is it then admitted to be fair to conclude from a part to the whole? from what we see and know of the universe to the universe itself? and then, from an effect which must, from the nature of the thing, be limited to deduce the *unlimited* or *infinite* wisdom of the CAUSE?—If it be, then, I ask further;—If any being is admitted to possess the knowledge of mankind which has just been described, are we not warranted to proceed on the same established principle of reasoning, and from this measure of knowledge to infer that it cannot stop here;—that it must extend further? Are not our *data* as good, in *this* case, as in the former? In both we are supposed to know to a limited extent; and if in the one case, an unlimited inference be warrantable, so must it also be in the other: and on the other hand, if the GOVERNOR and JUDGE may possess the knowledge described, and after all his knowledge be limited, I see not how the consequence can be evaded; that the FORMER OF ALL THINGS may have produced all the striking proofs of wisdom in the universe, and after all his *wisdom be limited*." To all this I reply, without fear of refutation, that the absolute infinity of the Divine attributes neither is, nor can be certainly inferred, as Mr. Wardlaw seems to suppose, from the limited degree in which we perceive them to exist, but must be deduced from their perceived existence as attributes of an eternal, self-existent, independent, and therefore infinite First-cause. To the perfections of such a being nothing can be conceived to set bounds, and we therefore naturally and justly regard them as boundless. Our proof of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God is not merely—that *he who is known to have so much must have more*. Such reasoning would be weak and inconclusive indeed, not less so in theology than in common life, and might well incur the ridicule of philosophers, much less acute and subtle than

Mr. Hume, who, if I recollect rightly, has taken some pains to refute an argument of this kind for the infinite benevolence of God, assuming—I had hitherto thought, without sufficient reason—that it was one in which considerable confidence was placed by theologians. Such, however, it appears to me, is not our proof, but it is this—that the attributes of the *infinite First-cause* once ascertained, must themselves be regarded as *infinite*. Power, residing in him who is self-existent and independent, must be incontroulable power.—Wisdom, considered as the attribute of a boundless mind, must be boundless wisdom.—Goodness contemplated as the affection of a Being whose designs cannot be thwarted or opposed; who is independently and supremely happy; in whom no conceivable source of malignity can be supposed to exist, must be infinite goodness. The source, in short, of all goodness, wisdom, and power, must himself possess these attributes in their greatest possible extent.

When, therefore, we infer from the works of creation which we see, that the knowledge and wisdom of their great Maker are, strictly speaking, infinite; our data are *not*, as Mr. Wardlaw hastily supposes, limited, and it is for this reason only that our conclusion is not so. Our data are an infinite First-cause, and attributes, of which, though we see them but in part, we nevertheless conclude, from their inherence in an infinite Being, that they exist in an infinite degree. Did we not take it for granted, from the express declarations of scripture, and in the absence of all evidence to the contrary, that this world received its present form and order, from the First-cause himself, employing his own instrumentality, and not that of any intermediate intelligent agent;—we should not be warranted, in my opinion, in inferring even from the striking proofs of wisdom displayed in its structure,—astonishing beyond human thought, as they certainly are,—that the *immediate or instrumental former*, if I may use the expression, was *infinitely* wise: though we should still be at liberty to draw that inference with the greatest certainty of the *Original Creator*, as that Being from whom the existence and the attributes, the powers and the performances of every other being must ultimately flow. *As far as we can see*, there is nothing absolutely *impossible* or *contradictory* in the supposition, though I admit that neither reason nor scripture directly favour it, that the Supreme may have employed the instrumentality of one inferior agent or more in this world's

formation, and endowed them with wisdom and power sufficient for the purpose:* on which hypothesis the inference from the limited exhibition of any attribute by those agents to the unlimited possession of it, would evidently be false and groundless. In relation to the First-cause only is such a conclusion justifiable. If these observations are correct, it will follow that Mr. Wardlaw cannot prove the omniscience of our Lord from his possession of any finite measure of knowledge how wonderful soever, unless he can also prove, what it would be a *petitio principii* to assume, that he was not only the possessor, but the self-existent, independent, and original source of such knowledge.

In connection with the subject of the preceding observations it is worthy of notice that Dr. Paley, in the 24th chapter of his admirable work on Natural Theology, treating particularly of the Divine attributes, distinctly admits that their infinity, in the strict sense of that word, cannot be proved, as Mr. Wardlaw seems to imagine it may, by the argument a *posteriori*; on the contrary, he thinks it necessary to observe, that when *omnipotence, omniscience,* &c., are ascribed to the Creator on the ground of that argument, it can only be in a loose and general sense, to denote a degree of power and knowledge "to which *we are not authorised to assign* limits"—"which cannot, *with respect to us,* be distinguished from infinite." "We ascribe power," says he, "to the Deity under the name of *omnipotence,* the strict and correct conclusion being, that a power which could create such a world as this is, must be, beyond all comparison, greater than any which we experience in ourselves, than any which we observe in other visible agents; greater also, than any which we can want, for our individual protection and pre-

* "It may be acknowledged," says Dr. Paley, "that no arguments which we are in possession of, exclude the ministry of subordinate agents. If such there be, they act under a presiding, a controlling will; because they act according to certain general restrictions, by certain common rules, and as it should seem upon a general plan: But still such agents, and different ranks and classes, and degrees of them, may be employed." (Nat. Theol. chap. xxv. p. 454. 14th edition.) Does Mr. Wardlaw dispute the justice of this observation, or if he admit it, will he not also admit that in the highest rank of such agents there may possibly be minds of which he could not take the gauge,—whose knowledge though infinitely short of omniscience, might appear to him to have no visible termination, its limits lying far beyond his utmost ken?

servation, in the Being upon whom we depend. It is a power, likewise, to which we are not authorised, by our observation or knowledge, to assign any limits of space or duration." His observations on the attribute of omniscience are exactly similar. "The wisdom of the Deity" he observes, "as testified in the works of creation, surpasses all idea we have of wisdom: and, which is of chief importance to us, whatever be its compass or extent, which it is evidently impossible that we should be able to determine, it must be adequate to the conduct of that order of things under which we live. And this is enough. We can trace this attribute much beyond what is necessary for any conclusion to which we have occasion to apply it." I know not what Dr. Paley may have thought of the argument, generally termed a priori, which infers the absolute infinity of the Divine Attributes from the consideration of their inherence in the self-existent First-cause, an argument which, to my mind, *seems to bring*, (for I would speak with diffidence on a subject so abstruse,) considerable, if not complete satisfaction. But from the preceding passages I think it at least sufficiently evident that he did not venture to carry the inference a *posteriori* nearly so far as Mr. Wardlaw,—that he thought it right in this instance, as in every other, to regulate his conclusion by his premises,—and that he would not by any means have approved of an "unlimited conclusion from *limited* data." (See Wardlaw on the Socinian controversy, Discourse iv. Pages 117—118. Note G. p. 426. and Unitarianism incapable of Vindication, Chap. vii. pp. 236—246. See also Yates's Vindication of Unitarianism, Chap. vii. pp. 217—221. and Sequel to the Vindication, Chap. vii. pp. 128—131.)

NOTE D. Page 21.

An interpretation of the text recommended by the respectable authority of Dr. Macknight, ought not perhaps to be left altogether unnoticed. I take the liberty, therefore, of subjoining here a passage from Mr. Wardlaw's reply to Mr. Yates, which will at once explain its nature, and indicate that able writer's opinion upon it, with which my own, for the most part, coincides. "In these observations," says Mr. Wardlaw in a note to page 323, of his "Unitarianism incapable of Vindication"—"I have taken no notice of the criticism of Dr. Macknight, who

thinks that the verb ειδεν has here the force of the Hebrew conjugation Hiphil, and signifies to *make to know*, or *to declare*. To avoid the obvious inference, that if "*knoweth*" means "*maketh known*;" when it is used of men and angels, and the Son, it must have the same meaning as to *the Father*; which would make the text affirm, in opposition to fact, that the Father *made known* the day of judgment:—to avoid this inference, a second, "*that is*," becomes necessary: "none maketh you to know," *that is*, "none *hath power* to make you know it." So that the verb "*to know*," is first made to signify to *make known*; and then, *to make known* means *to have power to make known*. This seems rather too much. Is it not simpler to say *at once*, that *not to know* signifies *not to have official commission to make known*?—The only parallel case which the Doctor adduces in support of his view, is 1 Cor. ii. 2. where Paul says, "I determined to *know* nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified;" *i. e.* says he, "I determined to make known, to preach nothing among you but Jesus Christ." But although this may be considered as the *effect* of the verb here, it is the effect rather by *consequence* or inference, than by its *direct meaning*.—It can hardly be said with propriety that "to *know* nothing" means "to *make known* nothing." It is only a strong expression of the apostle's resolution to appear among them, and to preach among them, *as if ignorant of every thing else*, but the great subject of his ministry. He came among them in the character of *an apostle of Jesus Christ*. As a man he was acquainted with many other things; and he might be under temptations to display his knowledge. But *as an apostle* he had one message to deliver, and he determined, in his *official capacity*, to know nothing else than that message. In the same way, "the Son" did not "*know*" the day of judgment. He knew it not in his official capacity, &c."

The arguments contained in the preceding passage, against Dr. Macknight's interpretation, are so conclusive, as to render it needless to say any thing farther upon the subject. One or two observations however of a different kind are naturally suggested by the perusal of the above extract. And, in the first place, how is it that Mr. Wardlaw, who was so well aware in Dr. Macknight's case of the impropriety of assigning to the Greek verb a different meaning when applied to the Father, from that which it bears in its application to men, and angels, and the Son, should nevertheless

have fallen, as I have shown, into the very same error himself? "Is it not simpler," he asks in this very note, "to say *at once* that *not to know* signifies *not to have official commission to make known*?" But how was it that Mr. Wardlaw did not perceive, when he proposed this interpretation, that it would suggest an "inference" equally "obvious," and no less inconvenient than any that could flow from Dr. Macknight's; since it would evidently make the text affirm, in opposition not merely to "fact," but to common sense, that though the Son *had not* this "*official commission to make known the day and hour*," the Father *had*, and yet did not execute it?

The impartial reader too, I should think, can hardly fail to be struck with the awkwardness of Mr. Wardlaw's attempt to force the text, which he had successfully wrested from Dr. Macknight, into the service of his own favourite hypothesis. He has clearly shown that the learned Doctor has misinterpreted 1 Cor. ii. 2. and he has very correctly explained the passage himself, as containing nothing more, than "a strong expression of the apostle's resolution, to appear among them, and preach among them, as if ignorant of every thing else but the great subject of his ministry." This is in truth the full meaning of the text. The apostle, whilst labouring in the vineyard at Corinth, "determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified," *i. e.* He resolved for the time to banish from his thoughts all other knowledge,—to dwell exclusively on this grand and most important subject,—to concentrate all the energies of his heart and mind upon it,—to make it the constant topic of his arguments and exhortations,—to be, for a season as one who had forgotten every thing else,—who, if one might venture to adopt the strong language of the great dramatist,

> "From the table of his memory
> Had wip'd away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
> That youth and observation copied there;"
> That this great argument "alone might live
> Within the book and volume of his brain,
> Unmix'd with baser matter."

Such is the obvious spirit of a passage, worthy of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, which Dr. Macknight, to answer his critical ends, would have robbed of all its force and vigour, but which Mr. Wardlaw has rescued out of his hands.

It is to be regretted that he was not satisfied with so doing, but should have been tempted, like many other conquerors, to convert, without right, to his own use, that of which he had rightfully deprived another. Anxious, like the learned Doctor, to illustrate his own interpretation of Mark, xiii. 32. and if possible to find out "a parallel case," he too endeavours to discover one here. With this view he supposes Paul, in the passage before us, to have instituted in his own mind, a comparison between what he knew as a man, and what he knew as an apostle,—and to have determined not to know any thing, "*in his official capacity*," but Jesus Christ and him crucified. Now, it is evident that in his official capacity he *could have known* nothing else, and that if such indeed was the whole amount of his determination, it was of little meaning or value, since without violating it, he might still, *in his human capacity*, have known, and thought, and spoken on as many subjects as he pleased. But perhaps Mr. Wardlaw will say that I have misunderstood him, and that his idea—was, not that the apostle determined, *to know nothing else in his official capacity*,—but that, *in his official capacity he formed the determination*;—that deeply impressed with the importance of his office, he resolved for a season to dedicate himself wholly to the discharge of its sacred duties, and in the apostle determined as much as possible to forget the man. This I allow is a good meaning, and perfectly consistent with that which has been already given. But what, let me ask, upon this supposition, becomes of the insinuated parallelism, and how does the passage thus interpreted illustrate Mr. Wardlaw's view of Mark, xiii. 32.? I cannot help thinking that Mr. W. has been partly deceived by an ambiguity in one of his own sentences. "He determined," says he, "in his official capacity, to know nothing, &c." a comma divides the favourite phrase both from the preceding and subsequent word. The sense requires that it should belong to the former, but the hypothesis claims it for the latter, and Mr. W., perhaps from inadvertency, perhaps from haste to seize upon a fancied proof of a favourite idea, forgets his own meaning, and yields to the weaker claim. He does not perceive that it is an official *determination*, and not official *knowledge* or *ignorance* of which he is speaking. However that may be, it is certain that 1 Cor. ii. 2. says as little of "*knowing or not knowing in an official capacity*," as Mark xiii. 32.,—that the former passage is in no respects parallel to the latter,—and that it cannot be employed, with the least

effect, either in the service of Dr. Macknight's hypothesis, or Mr. Wardlaw's. (For Dr. Adam Clarke's opinion of Dr. Macknight's criticism, see note *E.*)

NOTE E. PAGE 22.

The learned commentator referred to is Dr. Adam Clarke, of whose opinion respecting the clause in question I had heard, though, not having at the time enjoyed an opportunity of consulting his laborious and useful work, I could only conjecture the arguments by which he might possibly endeavour to support it. I have since however been more fortunate, and think it but justice to submit the whole of Dr. Clarke's note on the passage to the consideration of my readers. " Mark xiii. 32. *Neither the Son.*] This clause is not found either in Matthew or Luke, and Ambrose says it was wanting in some Greek copies in his time. To me it is utterly unaccountable, how Jesus who knew so *correctly* all the *particulars* which he here lays down, and which were to a jot and tittle verified by the event—how he who knew that not *one* stone should be left on *another*, should be ignorant of the *day* and *hour* when this should be done, though *Daniel*, chap. ix, 24, &c. could fix the very *year*, not less than five hundred years before it happened—how he in whom the *fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily*, and all the treasures of *wisdom* and *knowledge*, should not know this *small matter*, I cannot comprehend, but on this ground, that the Deity which dwelt in the Man Christ Jesus, might, at one time, communicate less of the knowledge of futurity to him, than at another. However I strongly suspect that the clause was not originally in this gospel. Its not being found in the parallel places in the other Evangelists is, in my opinion, a strong presumption against it. But Dr. Macknight and others, solve this difficulty in the following manner. They suppose the verb οἶδα to have the force of the Hebrew conjugation *Hiphel*, in which, verbs are taken in a *causative*, *declarative*, or *permissive* sense: and that it means here make known or promulge, as it is to be understood in 1 Cor. ii. 2.* This intimates that this secret was not to be *made known*, either

* Does Dr. Clarke then assent to Dr Macknight's interpretation of this passage?

by *men* or *angels*, no, not even by the son of man himself, but it should be *made known* by the Father only, in the execution of the purposes of his *justice*. I am afraid this only *cuts* the knot, but does not *untie* it."

The reader will perceive that I have already anticipated and answered, with what success it is for him to form his own opinion, some of the arguments contained in the preceding note. The learned doctor, I should think, cannot mean to ascribe much importance to *the reported evidence of "some Greek copies," asserted by Ambrose to have existed in his time*, in opposition to the consenting testimony of *every respectable manuscript and version now extant*. On the acknowledged absence of the words from Matt. xxiv. 36. it is not perhaps necessary to add any thing to what has been already said in the body of the discourse. With respect to Luke, it may be sufficient to observe that *no part* of the verse whatsoever occurs in that Evangelist. The absence of *one clause* of it therefore cannot surely be regarded as very extraordinary, or afford any stronger presumption against that particular clause, than against the rest which are still permitted to occupy their places undisturbed. Surely Dr. Clarke cannot intend to say that the absence of the *whole verse* from Luke's gospel affords "a strong presumption" against it, and yet, from his introducing the mention of Luke at all, this inference might have been fairly drawn. Upon such a principle of retrenchment, the narratives of the Evangelists might indeed be reduced, in no long time, within a much narrower compass. I am willing to believe however, that the mention of a "parallel place" in Luke, in which "*this clause*" is wanting, though certainly calculated to mislead the reader, and on that account requiring particular notice, is to be regarded as a mere oversight or lapse of memory on the part of the writer, an opinion perhaps confirmed by the observation that in his list of marginal references, we find no passage either in Matthew or Luke, particularly noted as parallel to *this verse*, not even Matt. xxiv. 36. So much for the critical part of Dr. Clarke's note, which, I trust, it will not be thought presumptuous to pronounce *altogether unsatisfactory*.

On what remains I beg leave to offer a few observations; and in the first place it is difficult to conceive how the "smallness of the matter," on which some stress appears

to be laid, should render our Lord's alledged ignorance of it at all more surprising or incredible. I should have thought, on the contrary, that ignorance must be less astonishing, exactly in the same proportion as knowledge is more so, in other words, in proportion as the subjects of it are more minute and particular. "How could one who knew so much be ignorant of this *great* matter?" might perhaps look something like an argument; but if for the word "great" we substitute "small," I confess I can no longer see the least appearance of force in it. The truth is that the greatness or smallness of the matter has nothing to do with the question, which is simply this—can we account for its being unknown to Jesus? or, is the assertion that he did not know it, so evidently false, so clearly contradicted by the testimony of scripture, as to render it allowable, on this ground alone, to question the genuineness of the clause?

One of two suppositions must be true: Jesus was omniscient, or he was not so. On the first of these, it is indeed quite impossible, to account for his ignorance of this, or of any other matter, whether small or great. Let it only be proved then, that the omniscience of our blessed Lord is the explicit doctrine of all that remains of the New Testament, and I shall be willing to allow, without a contest, that the evidence of a single passage to the contrary, how strong soever, cannot be admitted, and further, that the genuineness of such a passage would be rendered in the highest degree doubtful, by its direct opposition to the general tenour, and testimony of the work in which it was found. On this ground, if such had been his real opinion, Dr. Clarke might perhaps have been justified in questioning the authenticity of Mark xiii. 32. But this ground, for reasons which he has not stated,—if I might conjecture, I would suggest, because he did not think it tenable,—he has not thought fit to take. That the omniscience of our Lord is the doctrine of the New Testament, he does not assert, much less attempt to prove. Two texts indeed are cited, apparently with the view of illustrating the wonderful extent of our Lord's knowledge, and the intimacy of that union which subsisted between him and the Father, but it is not said, nor do I think the learned writer can mean to insinuate, that even these ascribe to him omniscience.* What then is the doctor's argu-

* The first of these is Coloss. ii. 9. "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" with which, if the reader will take the trouble to compare carefully Coloss. i. 19. Ephes. iii. 19. iv. 13. and their respective contexts, he will, I think, find that no inference can be

ment? As far as I can see, it amounts to nothing more than this,—"Our Lord knew much, therefore he must have known more,—he foresaw many and great things, therefore this small matter could not have been unforeseen by him." Dr. Clarke may perhaps find a brother controversialist, who will not disapprove of an inference of this kind, or deny it to be conclusive.: (see note C.) I should think however that its inconclusiveness will not be thought by many to require proof. From the *omniscience* of Jesus only, so far, I mean, as the future fates of man are concerned, in the absence of direct evidence to this particular point, could his knowledge of the day and hour, in contradiction to the assertion of my text, have been inferred.

But if Jesus was not an *omniscient* being;—if his knowledge, how extensive soever, was derived;—if he was in the obvious and literal meaning of the words, sent and taught by the Father, then must it be impossible for us to assume, without direct proof, either his knowledge or his ignorance of any one of those events, which it was in the sole option of the Father to reveal to him or not.—Then is it sufficient to reply to Dr. Clarke's inquiry—"how he who knew so much could be ignorant of this small matter,"—by the simple statement of the fact as it appears upon the record, that it had not pleased the Most High in his supreme wisdom to reveal it to him. God may surely reveal to his servants as much or as little as he pleases, and it is for *Him* only

drawn from it, either as to the deity or omniscience of our Lord. See also Schleusner's Lexicon on the word πληρωμα, No. 7. The other passage referred to is Coloss. ii. 3. thus translated in the received version—"*In whom* are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge," the relative "*whom*," being evidently intended by the translator, to refer to "Christ" in the preceding verse as its antecedent. If, however, Dr. Clarke had referred to Griesbach he would have found that the words translated, "*and of the Father and of Christ*" are by that critic excluded from the text, and consequently, if his authority be admitted in this case, that the relative refers, either to the word immediately preceding it, viz: "God," or perhaps not improbably to the previous word "mystery," in which case the passage should be thus rendered "to the acknowledgment of the *mystery* of God, in *which* are *hidden* all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." This reference of the relative to the remoter antecedent "mystery," we may remark, would be equally admissible even though the common textual reading were retained. It seems to me to be rendered more than probable by the obvious correspondence of the words "mystery" and "hidden."

to determine, who knows the certain issues of all matters small and great, which of them are fit and which unfit to be revealed.

On the whole I think it will appear to the impartial reader that the learned commentator has not advanced any arguments sufficient to warrant his "strong suspicion that the clause was not originally in this gospel." That we may appreciate the united force of his proofs, let us, in conclusion, briefly sum them up. They are, First, the reported evidence of some Greek MSS. existing in the time of Ambrose, in opposition to the testimony of all MSS. and versions extant;—Secondly, The absence of the words from the parallel verse of Matthew, where however their place is virtually supplied by the additional word "*only*;"—Thirdly, Their non-occurrence in the "parallel place" of Luke, in which no other part of the verse is found;—and Fourthly, The fancied difficulty of comprehending, how one, to whom so many future events were known, could be left in ignorance of one "small matter." Such is the evidence upon which a passage never before questioned, is to be thrown out of the sacred text, or at least to be regarded henceforth with an eye of suspicion. Will it not bear a doubt whether Dr. Macknight's awkward attempt "to cut the knot," be not after all preferable to Dr. Clarke's bold and unauthorised excision of it?

NOTE F. Page 26.

I have mentioned, in the observations to which this note refers, some opinions which I cannot regard as scriptural,—of which, indeed, I have sincerely professed myself, unable to discover in the scriptures even a faint outline. Lest I should be thought to have misrepresented my fellow Christians, in ascribing such opinions to them, I shall present my readers with some extracts from a published letter of Dr. Pye Smith's to Mr. Belsham, in which he professes to give "a concise statement of those sentiments which in their aggregate are generally called Calvinism."—And I refer to the writings of this gentleman the more willingly, not only from respect for a character, which I have always heard is that of a scholar and a Christian, but also from a persuasion that he holds the calvinistic system of doctrine in its mildest form, and that he will not be suspected by any one of exaggerating or caricaturing it, either wholly or in part.

I regret that my limits will not permit me to transcribe the whole letter.

"Revelation," says Dr. Smith, "authorizes us by a variety of inductive proofs, to conclude that, with regard to the mode of existence of the one Divine Essence, the unity of the Godhead includes a Trinity of persons (so denominated for want of any better terms) who are scripturally styled the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: distinct, not in essence or perfections, but only personally: One, not personally, but in the common possession of the same identical nature and attributes. No contradiction or absurdity is involved in this doctrine, because the unity refers to one respect, and the trinity to another."

"As in the physical system, sound philosophy discovers a divine constitution, operating by grandly comprehensive and general laws; so in the moral system we find a corresponding analogy. The first of these sublime moral constitutions, with which we are acquainted, is that which considered the first man, not as an individual person but as a federal head of the whole human nature. This constitution is usually called the covenant of works: and so far from being injurious, unamiable, or unwise, it can be shown to be most kind, benevolent, and holy; and to be founded on irrefragable reasons of moral propriety. From our views of human obligation and the nature of obedience and disobedience compared with the actual state of mankind as to virtue and vice; we infer that human nature is universally under the prevailing influence of propensities awfully depraved and pernicious, directly tending to the just and necessary consequences of sin. We account for this observed fact, by referring it to a violation of the Adamic constitution or covenant."

"To exercise sovereign mercy in the salvation of sinners, and to involve no degradation on the divine rectitude, God has been pleased to establish another grand federal constitution, usually called the covenant of redemption. In the arrangements of this constitution the persons in the Deity sustain distinct offices. To the Father peculiarly belongs the exercise of rectoral authority, as sovereign, lawgiver, judge, and vindicator of rectitude. The Son, constituted the second federal head of mankind, but with an especial respect to the objects of sovereign election, takes upon himself the relation, the responsibility, and of consequence the nature of man; and becomes a subject of the divine government, the servant and messenger of the Father,

the Mediator between God and man. To the Holy Spirit the charge is especially assigned of rendering efficient the whole work of saving mercy, by the personal application of its blessings. At the most proper time, the eternal Son of God, in correspondence with the federal relation that he had assumed, actually united himself to the human nature in the man Jesus. He rendered to the authority of the holy law those honours which only Deity, in union with human nature, could render: So that in his obedience and sacrifice there is an infinite superabundance of righteousness and merit, in triumphant counteraction to the awful ravages of sin."

"On this unchangeable foundation, the proper divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the consequent infinite value of his mediation, all the blessings of the covenant of grace are to be freely offered, as the gift of sovereign love, to every child of man without exception: and it is the indispensable duty of all who hear this call from God, to believe the glad tidings, to repent of all sin and renounce it for ever, and to devote themselves entirely to the blessed Redeemer as his faithful subjects. Yet, notwithstanding the amplitude and sincerity of this most gracious invitation; and though there is no obstacle whatever to a cordial compliance with it, except our own inexcusable badness and obstinacy; so deep-rooted is the base wickedness of men, that we all in fact refuse to obey the voice of heavenly authority and mercy. Jehovah who from eternity foreknew all this impiety and obduracy of men, still determined that his grace should not be frustrated. In the formation, therefore, of the great scheme of necessity, the Father chose an innumerable multitude of undeserving mortals; and predestinated them to holiness and eternal life. He gave them to the Mediator, as the especial objects of redeeming mercy. In the successive periods of time, the Holy Spirit executes upon them his official part in the economy of salvation. He rationally convinces them of the amiable glory of God, the infinite vileness of sin, and the equitable fitness of its eternal condemnation. He induces them, by the most effectual motives, to accept the Lord Christ as their King and Saviour, and to live a life of dependence on his grace, and sincere dedication to his holy service. Thus he carries on the divine work of progressive purity, and preparation for the heavenly state; till he has finally conducted to that immortal perfection of holiness and felicity, all his elect, redeemed, and sanctified people."

"To myself," says Dr. Smith, "these sentiments appear the voice of God, and the perfection of reason, harmony, and moral beauty." (See Dr. Smith's Letters to the Rev. Thomas Belsham on some important points of Theological Discussion," published in 1804.)

What the reader may think of these sentiments I know not. For myself, though I certainly would not go so far as to pronounce them "a mischievous compound of idolatry and impiety;" yet I must confess that I can regard them in no other light than as "the extravagance of error," into which, at the same time, I am well aware, that prejudices of various kinds, unacknowledged only because unperceived, have led and frequently do lead the best and wisest of men. So far from discovering any moral "beauty and harmony" in this system, even in the mild and mitigated form in which Dr. Smith has presented it, I can see little else than discord and deformity. I speak of course of those parts of it which are calvinistic, for I readily admit that with this, as with almost every other erroneous system of Christian faith, redeeming truths of the first importance are combined, which render the compound comparatively innoxious, if not positively beneficial.

To confine myself to the first of the doctrines stated in the above extract, that however the ground-work of the rest, where, I would ask, is the single passage in scripture, in which it is either stated or clearly implied that there exists, in the Godhead a *personal* distinction consistent with *essential* unity? I will venture to affirm not only that no such distinction is once mentioned in scripture, but that it cannot even be imagined by us. If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be, as it is said, *one being, essentially the same*, we must suppose,—if we annex to these words, in this connection, the ideas that we do in every other, and if not, let Trinitarians say what ideas we are to annex to them,—we must, I say, suppose that nothing can be predicated of any one of the three, which will not at the same time be true of the rest; for no instance has ever come beneath our notice, nor can we without a contradiction conceive such an one, in which the same truths may, at the same time, be predicated and not predicated of the same existence. But does the Trinitarian hypothesis allow that every thing that may be affirmed of the Father, may also be affirmed of the Son and Holy Spirit, and vice

verm? Far from it.—In the arrangement of what Dr. Smith calls the second grand federal constitution, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sustain *perfectly distinct* offices; nor does any Trinitarian suppose that it can be affirmed of either person that he is or does, what the other persons are and do. Here then it appears to me is a direct contradiction. Of the Father it is said that he holds a certain office, and performs certain acts, while of the *same existence*, called by the name of the Son or Holy Spirit, it is at the same time affirmed that he does not hold such office, or perform such acts.

But, says the Trinitarian, this is a gross misrepresentation. We not merely grant but maintain that the same being sustains all these offices,—that the acts of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit may all be predicated equally of God, but not equally of the different *persons* of the Godhead. I answer, what then do you mean by "*persons*"? for till this question is answered your reply is unintelligible. Do you mean distinct intelligent agents? No,—for that would be absolute tritheism, and no greater absurdity or contradiction could be devised or imagined, than would be obviously implied, in the supposition of three intelligent agents constituting but one intelligent agent. Well, then you do not mean intelligent agents: I must confess, I think this somewhat strange when I consider your language, which directly ascribes to the different persons of the Deity distinct counsel, contrivance, and agency, which I had hitherto thought could be ascribed to intelligent agents alone. Admitting however the sincerity of your denial, what do you mean? You say that the same being may have different persons, though not in the sense in which that term is generally used. What sense then shall we give to it? The Latin word persona, from which person is derived, originally meant a mask, worn by the actors of the drama, the "dramatis personæ," as they are thence called. Perhaps then you mean, by the word "persons," *assumed characters;* and when you say that the Father sustains one office, and the Son another, and the Holy Spirit a third, we are to understand that the same *being* in fact sustains them all, though under distinct names and appearances,—or, in other words, that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are nothing more than different names of the one God acting in different characters and relations;—are we right in our conjecture? Certainly not, the Trinitarian replies, the

interpretation which you mention would be rank Sabellianism, or, to make use of an image which you have yourself suggested, nothing better than Unitarianism in a mask. This indeed is *a way to get over the doctrine* in which, I grant, too many who cannot receive it, and yet have not the honesty to say, or perhaps the courage to think so, take refuge,—but it is not *the doctrine* itself. I must own then that I am quite at a loss to discover the meaning of your term, which, however, I am well aware, you would not use without a meaning. Neither the use of language, nor etymology, I find, will furnish any clue to it. I must therefore, however unwillingly, resort to conjecture. The same being, you say, may have different "persons." You do not mean *intelligent agents*, for that would be nonsense; —or *assumed characters*, for that would be heresy. What then, let me consider, can the same being have in himself that are different? I can think of nothing else than parts, attributes or properties, and relations. You can hardly mean to say, that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are different *parts* of the one infinite God? Most assuredly not—since that would be at once to pronounce infinity finite: in an infinite Being distinct and separable parts cannot exist: and even if this objection were not in itself sufficient,—the hypothesis, in point of orthodoxy, would be in no respects preferable to the one last mentioned. It would not be at all more heretical, and it would certainly be much less absurd, to denominate the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit assumed characters, than distinct parts of the Deity. No other meaning then remains for the term, that I can imagine, than attributes or relations. Are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be regarded as attributes or relations of the one God? The question answers itself,—you cannot think that I would be so absurd as to ascribe voluntary agency,—the exercise of "rectoral authority," for instance, in the Father,—the willing assumption of a new "relation and responsibility" in the Son,—the engagement "to render efficient the whole work of saving mercy" in the Holy Spirit; you cannot think, I say, that I would ascribe these, which are the actions of mind itself, and imply a voluntary agent, to the mere attributes or relations of mind; or that I would advance any proposition so unintelligible and unmeaning, as that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are nothing more than three distinct attributes or relations of the One Infinite God. I am quite at a loss then to comprehend, and despair of being able to

conjecture, what your proposition means. You make use of a term to which I can attach no signification whatsoever that you will admit to be the true one. Will you yourself have the goodness to explain to me the theological sense of the word "*persons*," that I may understand, what it is you so earnestly wish me, and tell me it is my duty to believe? To this home question how does the Trinitarian reply? Why—by a confession of ignorance:—by reluctantly conceding, after all this vain research, that he does not himself pretend to know the meaning of a principal term in the proposition to which he requires your assent. He is obliged to allow that he has not any distinct conception of the idea which the term "*persons*" is designed to convey. He cannot deny that any unintelligible term, any hitherto uninvented articulate sound, might have been employed with equal,—and indeed with greater propriety: since a word of that kind would not have misled any one into the erroneous supposition, that he comprehended its meaning.*

* Mr. Wardlaw is greatly displeased with Mr. Yates, and even questions his generosity as a disputant, for not having borne in mind throughout the perusal of his (Mr. W.'s) whole volume that "whenever the terms *person* and *personality* are used, he would not be understood as pretending to any precise and definite conception of the nature of that distinction in Deity which these terms import;" i. e. if I understand Mr. W. aright, that "whenever he uses these terms, he would be understood to use them, without any definite meaning." I cannot doubt, however, that Mr. W. will feel less displeased with Mr. Y. on this account, and more disposed to make a charitable allowance for his want of memory, when he finds that he himself, writing on this very subject a few pages before, had quite forgotten the important caution alluded to. "Where," he asks, in reference to some observations of Mr. Y.'s, "where is the proposition of which I have denied the necessity of understanding the terms before believing it? He has pointed out none;—and for a very good reason, because there *is* none. There are propositions relative to the fact of the Trinity, and the *terms*, used in these as declarative if the fact *are* understood." But one of these propositions, Mr. W. could not surely have forgotten, is that "there are three *persons* in the Deity:" and the word "persons," he will now recollect, is the very word which, he wished Mr. Yates to remember, was *always* employed by him in this proposition without any definite meaning. On this occasion, then, I am happy to be able to act the part of a peace-maker, and to plead with Mr. W. his own lapse of memory, if not as a sufficient excuse, yet as a motive to pardon Mr. Y.'s. Upon second thoughts, however, I begin to feel some doubt whether Mr. W.'s memory was so treacherous as I have supposed. His expression is—"The terms used in these

Still, however, while he grants all this, he refers you to scripture. There, he says. you will find a satisfactory answer to all your human reasonings.—There you will find my proposition, which, though I do not pretend to understand it, I nevertheless hold myself bound, on the authority of scripture, firmly to believe.—There you will read, that "with regard to the mode of existence of the one Divine Essence, the unity of the Godhead includes a Trinity of persons (so denominated for want of any better terms) who are scripturally styled the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." What say you?—"So denominated for want of any better terms!" Are not the terms referred to then, as well as those that follow, scriptural? If so—how can you presume to suppose that they are not the best possible? or if they are *not* scriptural, how is it that you have not rather chosen terms that are so, to convey a scriptural proposition? It may seem strange, says the Trinitarian in answer, but truth obliges me to confess, that though I refer you to the scriptures for the proof

propositions *as declarative of the fact* are understood:" but perhaps Mr. W. does not regard the term *persons* in his proposition as "declarative of the fact." If so, I can still plead for Mr. Y. that he might not be aware of this distinction, and might suppose that, in a *proposition* treating of the fact alone, *all the terms* were to be regarded as treating of it also. The term *persons* he might innocently think an essential term in the proposition, though it was merely used as a supernumerary. After all I am not certain that I may not still be mistaken. Though Mr. W. "would not be understood to annex to the term persons any *precise* and *definite* meaning," perhaps it is going too far to assume that he annexes to it no meaning at all—perhaps he does intend it to convey some faint and obscure meaning. Even in that case, however, would it not have been wise in order to guard against mistakes, and to prevent any one from entertaining the dangerous idea that acknowledged faintness and obscurity in this instance imply the entire absence of sense, to state distinctly what is meant, and to prove, in the most satisfactory manner, that it is not nothing, by shewing that it is something. Mr. W., though his subject seemed to require it, has given no definition whatsoever of the word *persons*, as it occurs in the proposition alluded to, and hence perhaps Mr. Y.'s supposition that no definition was to be given, and that the proposition contained a term which was not understood. Seriously I cannot think that Mr. W. can review calmly and dispassionately, what he has written on his use of the term *persons*, between pages 52 and 76 of his answer to Mr. Y., without perceiving that he has laboured in vain to elude a difficulty which he had not courage to face, or power to overcome. In one word, why does not Mr. W. define the term persons, or if, as I suspect, he cannot do so, at once relinquish the use of it as improper?

of myproposition, the terms which I have employed to convey it do not occur in them, nor indeed can I find any there that will exactly express my meaning. Indeed—that is certainly extraordinary—doubtless you suppose that our Lord and his apostles preached the doctrine, since it is from them, if I understand you rightly, that you profess to have received it.—How then did they express it? I really do not know, is the reply—but I am confident, nevertheless, that they *did* preach the doctrine, and that you will find it clearly laid down in scripture, that there are three distinctions of some kind or other,—three "somewhats," since you will not allow me to say persons, in the Divine Essence,—in other words, that there exists in the unity of the Godhead a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Not to dwell longer on the evident absurdity of ascribing to distinctions or somewhats, to mere properties or names, the attributes and actions of intelligent agents, I do not hesitate to reply tothis confident assertion that it is not founded in fact;—that the records of revelation contain no trace of the doctrine specified;—that there is not a single text which speaks of any distinction in the Divine Essence, or any division in the perfect unity of God. If there were any such, I trust I should pay respect even to the words of an inspired writer, and should be willing to allow, though the meaning might be hidden from me, that if ascertained it could not be otherwise than just and good. The very words of scripture are entitled to respect;—but not so the words or opinions of mere fallible men, which, without proof or warrant, they chose to represent as scriptural. The framers of Trinitarian creeds, I admit, have spoken with confidence and precision,—a confidence and precision which, in my opinion, inspiration alone could justify,—of the Divine Essence, and the supposed threefold distinction in it. But what, I ask, has Jesus Christ, or any one of his apostles, said on the subject? What single passage records their opinion? On the unity of God, indeed, they have said much—but on the Trinity not a word.

Not a word on the Trinity! What then will you say of all those passages in which Divine names, and works, and attributes, and honours are ascribed to Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, as well as to the Father?—Do not *they* speak of the Trinity? It may be true that no mention is made in express terms of a distinction in the Divine Essence, or in the perfect unity of the Godhead. But are not two other Beings, besides God the

Father, called God, and spoken of as God, and is not this the same thing? I answer that it is *not* the same thing: and that even if the fact thus confidently assumed were granted, which I am by no means disposed to think it can be, the conclusion would not follow. A distinction in the "perfect oneness of Deity" cannot be justly inferred from the mere circumstance of another being's exercising his powers, or even bearing his name, unless it can also be proved by independent evidence that the authority by which that being did so was essentially his own. God may surely manifest himself by different appearances and through different media, and yet still be one. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush, to the children of Israel in the pillar of fire and of cloud, to the high priest in the glory between the cherubim, to the Baptist in the dove that descended on the head of Jesus—to the sense of hearing he was made manifest in the voices that were heard by the multitude at his baptism, and by Peter, James, and John, on the mount of transfiguration. But do these audible or visible manifestations of the Deity establish so many distinctions in the Divine Essence, or Unity? and if not, who shall affirm, without "the express warrant of holy scripture," that by any manifestation of the Deity whatsoever, unaccompanied by his own express assurance of the fact, such a distinction can be established? If God can manifest himself by a bright light or a sound, making use of these low material agents, to proclaim his presence and his will, being, as the scriptures tell us, seen and heard in them, may he not much more employ the agency of finite minds for the same purpose;—may not they too be made the media of speech and action;—may he not be present in them, and by them display his power and declare his will? Suppose it so, and in what respect, let me ask, can this latter case render the doctrine of the perfect unity of God more doubtful than the former?

Even if I could believe that the personality of the Holy Spirit, in the only intelligible sense of that word, was the doctrine of scripture;—and that in consequence of the union enjoyed by that being, and our Lord, with the Supreme, I was permitted to call them God;—even then I should not think myself warranted to regard them in any other light, than as finite representatives, visible manifestations, audible voices of the infinite and indivisible Father: nor should I feel justified in assuming, *without an express assurance to that purpose,* that their distinction from

that infinite Being, in and by whom they acted, implied any distinction whatsoever in his "perfect oneness." Trinitarians, in my opinion, do little or nothing for their own cause, when they merely produce passages in which Divine names or attributes seem to be ascribed to our Lord and the Holy Spirit, unless they can also show, by direct evidence, that they are ascribed to them, not merely as beings united with the Father,—but as persons or subsistencies in the Deity distinct from the Father, yet co-equal and co-essential with him,—as God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, if I may venture to use terms so grossly and undeniably unscriptural, terms which, if so many good and pious men had not employed them, I should have been almost tempted to call profane.

That there is no passage in scripture which authorises us to ascribe divine honours, or to offer divine worship to our Lord Jesus Christ, or to any being or person, save God the Father only, I am perfectly convinced and firmly believe; but of this I am, if possible, more certain, that there is none which recognizes any distinction in the Essence, or division in the personal unity, of Deity. This latter only is the proper doctrine of the Trinity, but this latter none of the scripture testimonies adduced by Trinitarians have the least tendency to prove.* The very

* "The scriptures," says Mr. Wardlaw, "simply assure us of the fact." Of what fact? Not that there are three *persons* in the Godhead,—nor that there is a three-fold distinction in the Divine Essence,—nor that Deity is in some sense or other three as well as one,—nor yet that the Son and Holy Spirit are each of them infinite and Divine, identical with God, though distinct from the Father, from the man Christ Jesus, and from each other. Not one of these propositions, Mr. W. well knows, is to be found in any part of the scriptures. What then is the fact of which they assure us? That Divine titles, works, and attributes are ascribed to our Lord and the Holy Spirit.—This is the very most that Mr. W. can mean. Suppose this fact admitted then:—which, let me ask that able and ingenious writer, is the most natural and simple way of accounting for it?—To assume without any authority from reason or scripture, that there is in the Divine Essence or Unity, a certain mysterious and inexplicable distinction, the very possibility of which, to say nothing of its reality, cannot be proved;—or to acquiesce at once in the plain account which our Lord himself has given of the matter, viz: that he derived from the Father all his power, and wisdom, and authority, that the Father spoke and acted in him and by him. "If ye had known *me*," said Jesus, "ye should have known *my Father* also: and from henceforth ye know, and have seen him; Philip

most that the passages usually alledged by them, even if we were to admit their own interpretations, could establish, would be this, that other beings, of inferior nature, have been ordained by the Deity to represent him to the feeble conceptions of his creatures, and while they shone by his light, by his authority proclaimed his will, and by his power executed his decrees, have been permitted, in his name and on his account, to receive the honours ultimately due to him alone. I do not say that this is the doctrine of scripture,—on the contrary, I think it, in its full extent, false and unscriptural;—but I maintain that it is the very most that the proofs usually adduced by Trinitarians, admitting their own construction, can establish. For the alledged eternal distinction in the essence of the Godhead, of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not a shadow of a proof has been, or, in my opinion, can be produced. Yet this is the doctrine which Dr. Pye Smith, in common with every other consistent Trinitarian, maintains.

I doubt not their sincerity: I question not their motives: but I would seriously ask them one question; ought there not to be the strongest, and the most direct authority,—authority from God

saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you, and yet thou hast not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." John xiv. 7—11. see also verse 20. This passage speaks for itself. It indicates clearly the only sense in which our Lord ever did, or ever could speak of himself as being one with the Father. The Father dwelt within him by his Spirit, and might well be represented, as speaking the words which he suggested, and doing the works which he enabled his chosen servant to do. Philip in seeing Jesus had seen the Father. Why? Because Jesus was in the Father, and the Father in him. But how is this passage to be reconciled with the doctrine of the Trinity, according to which, it was the Son dwelling in, or rather combined with Jesus,—the second person of the Trinity, and not the first,—that spake the words and did the works? The plain truth is, that the doctrine of the Trinity is nothing more than a mere human hypothesis, employed to explain passages, better explained without it:—or, to adopt an illustration of Mr. Wardlaw's, a key of many wards and brittle materials designed to open a lock, for which a simpler key, of more solid metal, will serve infinitely better.

himself clear and indisputable,—for a doctrine which professes to present an analysis of the very essence of Deity,—to suggest a modification, to say the very least, of the simple unity of the infinite First-cause,—to explain, if not to add to the declaration of God himself by his prophet "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah thy God is one Jehovah,"—to expound more clearly, and to set forth more at large, the creed of our Lord himself, and his apostles;—of our Lord himself saying, on one occasion, "why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is God," and on another, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice that I go unto my Father, because my Father is greater than I," and on a third, "Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father; but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God;"—of our Lord's apostle thus clearly and unambiguously expressing himself, "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all," and again, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," and once more, "Though there be that are called Gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be Gods many and Lords many: But to us there is but *one God, the Father,* of whom are all things, and we in him; and *one Lord, Jesus Christ,* through whom are all things, and we through him"? Ought not that doctrine, I repeat it, to rest on the strongest foundation of divine testimony, which not only treats of the profoundest of all subjects, the essential nature of God himself; but which goes to modify so materially, if not to set aside, some of the clearest declarations of his inspired servants?* Whether Trinitarians have such

* The charge of indulging the vain and presumptuous idea, of fathoming the unsearchable mysteries of the Divine Nature, has not unfrequently been preferred against Unitarians; upon what principle I know not, unless it be that principle of policy which sometimes prompts a disputant to endeavour, if possible, to astonish and confound his antagonist, by preferring against him the very accusation, which he had fully expected to be preferred against himself. Surely if presumption must be ascribed to either party,—though I am not aware of the necessity, and should therefore greatly prefer the milder term error,—it should rather be to those who pretend to define what the Divine nature is, or at least to point out the distinctions that are in it, than to those who withhold their assent from any such unauthorised definitions or descriptions;—rather to those who, without the direct sanction either of reason or revelation, affirm the Deity to

testimony to produce it is for them seriously to enquire, and honestly to declare: my own deep conviction is that they haven ot.

Let the serious Christian, I would only say, who really feels anxious to form a just and unbiassed opinion on the subject, take up the Bible, it matters little in what version;—let him for a season forget, if possible, his own peculiar system, whether orthodox or heterodox;—let him lay all his favourite expositors and commentators upon the shelf;—let him carefully and diligently peruse the scripture, without note or comment;—and, if I am not altogether mistaken, he will find himself, at the close of his examination, constrained to confess that, if there

be both three and one, than to those who, confining themselves strictly to the language of scripture, and the express declarations of God himself, dare only to affirm that he is one;—rather to those who exalt an *inference* of their own, certainly neither intuitively obvious nor necessary, into an essential divine truth, than to those who think no human inference, even if it were apparently just, entitled to equal weight with the inspired decisions of scripture;—rather to those who pronounce dogmatically that mere human formulas of faith and doctrine have "the express warrant of holy scripture," than to those who hesitate to admit as scriptural, doctrines which are not taught, and cannot be expressed in scriptural terms;—rather to those who do not scruple, in the public congregation, *in the solemn presence of Almighty God, and as a part of his holy service*, to express their unqualified and implicit belief in such matters of doubtful disputation, to say the very least, as are contained in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, than to those who require much higher authority than that of fallible men, or fallible councils, to induce them to entertain, or to warrant them in publicly and solemnly professing such belief. Whatever may be said of "Unitarian presumption" in this respect, the charge most assuredly comes with an ill grace from persons who profess to know so much more of the Divine Nature and Essence than Unitarians do,—who draw conclusions respecting it from passages in which it is not even mentioned,—and who dignify those conclusions, though *mere deductions of their own*, and never once directly indicated by scripture, with the name of sacred and essential truths. Let any one carefully and seriously peruse the Athanasian, the Nicene, Dr. Pye Smith's, or any other Trinitarian creed,—let him consider their doubtful and difficult matter, for such it is at the best, and mark their uncouth and unscriptural phraseology,—and then let him say, whether the guilt of presumption, if it must attach any where, (which however when I consider the endless wanderings of human error, I do not think it necessary to believe) ought not rather to be imputed to the man who, without any modest doubt or prudent reservation, professes, than to him who feels himself compelled, by the testimony both of reason and of scripture, to withhold his credence.

is any one doctrine which shines with a brighter light than another, pervading every part of the sacred writings, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, it is that of *the undivided personal unity, the unrivalled and unparticipated supremacy of* God the Father;—he will be obliged to acknowledge, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not only one which cannot be stated (as Dr. Smith himself virtually admits) in scriptural terms,—a circumstance in itself surely most suspicious,—but that it is one which, when stated, derives no support whatsoever either from the spirit or letter of scripture.

Is it to be believed then, some will say, that on this great point, the Unitarians only, an insignificant and upstart sect, are right; while all the rest of the Christian world, for so many ages, have wandered and still wander in error? Before the question is hastily answered in the negative, let me earnestly request those who put it, to pause one moment for self-examination,—to ascertain, if possible, for their own satisfaction, the motive of the inquiry,—to be quite sure, if it be not pride, that it is not prejudice,—and that they are not under the influence of that narrow feeling which could lead even a Nathaniel to exclaim, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Let them remember that God has sometimes chosen "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak to confound the mighty, and things that are not to bring to nought things that are;"—and that "to be every where spoken against," though in itself no proof of merit, perhaps rather a presumption of the contrary, may yet, in some instances, be the early fate of a cause, ordained ultimately, to establish a triumphant claim upon the good opinion and gratitude of the world.

That corruptions of Christian doctrine, of various kinds, crept into the church at a very early period, and were many of them very widely disseminated, and that several of these, by the exertions of individual reformers, have, in the gradual course of succeeding ages, been exposed and rejected, cannot be questioned. What renders it incredible then that similar corruptions may still be discovered, and that the truth, as it is in Jesus, may be yet further purified from the intermixture of human error? Some corruptions of this kind, and one great one particularly, the basis of the rest, Unitarians believe that they have detected, and wish to point out to the serious notice of their fellow-christians. On this great point, as on every other, the

truth is their object, and all that they ask for is a calm and impartial examination of arguments, which, in their opinion, have never yet been refuted.

Into the other peculiarities of Calvinism, stated by Dr. Pye Smith, in the passages which I have extracted, it would be impossible to enter at large within the compass of these pages. I shall therefore merely leave them for the consideration of the reader, in the sober and serious conviction, that, *if he can* divest his mind of "educational prejudice,"—which is not perhaps always possible,—and will compare them with the plain testimony of scripture, he will find them altogether deficient in the only kind of evidence that could establish doctrines from which reason entirely withholds her support. To the unbiassed mind, I think there will be something, at the very first view, repulsive, in a theory which seems to represent the Deity as resorting to expedients to evade or modify the foreseen consequences of his own decrees;—as reconciling justice and mercy, (qualities which, as far as I can see, in a Being of infinite goodness and wisdom, could not be opposed,) by a fiction, viz: the sufferings of a being who could not suffer, and the death of a being who could not die;—as sustaining at the same time opposite and inconsistent characters,—that of the Father and the Son, of the victim and the Deity, of the appeaser and the appeased;—as creating and upholding numberless finite beings for infinite misery;—as arbitrarily selecting and qualifying others for holiness, happiness, and eternal life. This, perhaps it will be said, is not a fair representation of Calvinistic doctrine. If so, let it not be accepted. Dr. Smith's own account is before the reader. I can only say that I cannot, myself, see it in any other light. Nothing, I confess, seems to me more remote from the simple truth, as it is in Jesus, than the complex, abstruse, metaphysical scheme, of which the learned writer has presented the outline. But let us "prove all things, and be every one of us fully persuaded in his own mind."

NOTE G. Page 28.

I have inferred, from the prayers of Jesus, that he could not be the omniscient God. Should it be replied that it was the human nature only of our Lord that prayed; the answer is obvious, that such an hypothesis is liable to all the objections

already urged against that interpretation of my text which was first examined, and with which we have heard Mr. Wardlaw himself confessing that he has "never been well satisfied." It evidently implies that Jesus Christ was not one compound, but two distinct beings, governed by two infinitely dissimilar minds, one prescient of all things, the other ignorant at least of some,—one the perfect hearer, and the other the finite offerer of prayer. Where too, I would ask the candid and serious Christian, who ventures to draw for himself from the pure fountain of scripture,—who has determined not to follow a multitude into error any more than into evil,—and who has learned, from the best example and the highest authority, not to turn a deaf ear to reason, because the many call it heresy: where, I would ask such an one, are the passages, or even the passage in the New Testament, in which a plurality or division of this kind, in the nature of our Lord, is revealed? Where are we informed, (I do not say by ancient Fathers, or by modern doctors and divines,) but by Jesus Christ himself, or any one of his inspired followers, that, while some of the words and actions of our Saviour are to be ascribed to Christ Jesus the Deity, others are to be regarded as proceeding separately and solely from Christ Jesus the man?

In what single instance do we find our Lord speaking of the filial Godhead, with whom, nevertheless, he is represented as being *most* intimately united; or addressing his prayers, in the manner of modern Christians, to a second, or a third *person* of the Godhead? In what passage does he call upon "God the Son Redeemer of the world,"—or upon "God the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son,"—or upon the Triune Deity, "Three persons in one God?" Yet surely if his human nature could speak and act apart from his divine, we should, upon the Trinitarian hypothesis, have had some at least, if not many such instances. Our great exemplar would not have left us, as many modern Christians seem to think he has done, imperfect models of devotion. He would not have addressed the First Person only, to the exclusion of the Second, and Third, though co-equal, co-essential, and co-eternal. He would not have allowed his followers to be more full and correct, in the form of their devotions, than himself. He would have furnished, both by precept and example, an unanswerable justification of the practice of those who address him, in his supposed Divine

nature, through a long series of petitions, with the very epithet which, in his humanity, he certainly rejected, saying—"Good Lord we beseech thee to hear us." Let the serious Christian consider how far he is justified, in framing his devout addresses to his God, without clear and distinct authority from scripture, upon a model altogether different from that which Jesus Christ and his apostles have furnished;—in disregarding that plain injunction of our Lord upon which there is so much reason to believe that his first followers uniformly acted—"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing: verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."*

On this important subject I am tempted to add a few observations. That Jesus Christ is to be worshipped as God, I can hardly imagine how any one who has carefully perused the New Testament, with an unbiassed mind, and a serious view to gain correct information, can maintain. That we are allowed to address to him, as "head over all things to his church," a species of subordinate *worship*, I know to be the opinion of some wise and good men, nor do I pretend to say, that such an opinion is altogether devoid of apparent countenance from scripture. I confess, however, that to me, this countenance appears to be merely apparent. The expression indeed of fervent gratitude, reverence, and love to our Saviour,—the ascription of heart-felt praise to his name,—the utterance of the warm desire and prayer that his favour and blessing, as well as that of his Father, may attend ourselves, and those for whom our petitions are offered up,—these, I readily admit, are none of them forbidden: on the contrary, they have the direct and unambiguous sanction of many plain passages of scripture.†

These, however, are not *worship*, which, if I understand the term, implies, in its usual acceptation, a direct address to the being who is the object of it, and consequently supposes his

* John, xvi. 23. See also Matt. vi. 6—15. xxvi. 39—44. Luke, xi. 1—4. xxiii. 46. John, xi. 41. xiv. 13, 14—16. xv. 16. xvi. 24—26. xvii. Acts, iv. 24—30. Ephes. i. 15—23. iii. 14. v. 20. Phil. iv. 6, 7. Coloss. i. 3. iii. 17. Heb. xiii. 15. Rev. iv. 8—11. Compare v. 7—14. vii. 9—12. viii. 3, 4. xi. 15—18. xiv. 6, 7. xv. 3, 4. xix. 4, 6, 10. xxii. 9.

† See Romans, i. 7. xvi. 24, &c. Phil. ii. 10, 11. 1 Thess. iii. 11. 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17. 1 Tim. i. 12. 2 Pet. iii. 18. Rev. v. 7—14.

actual and immediate personal presence. But is not Jesus *present* with his church upon earth? That he is so, in some sense or other, I feel no disposition to question. It is, I think, a doctrine of scripture,—a doctrine which cannot but be grateful to every Christian heart. But of what nature that presence is, whether virtual, or actual; if actual whether universal, or limited; and if limited what the limits are; these are points on which it is not perhaps possible to form a decided opinion, since no inspired writer seems to have furnished us with the means. I trust that I should receive, with humility and gratitude, any light on this interesting subject, that God might vouchsafe to grant; but on this subject, as on every other, I too must be permitted to say with Mr. Wardlaw, that I neither can, nor desire "to go farther than my Bible carries me." Though it may be granted without a contest, that the Son is virtually present in the Father, loving what he loves, and condemning what he condemns,—yet that he is immediately and personally so, which a direct address to him would obviously assume, is not, to the best of my judgment, a doctrine clearly laid down in any part of scripture. I certainly should not venture to deny, but neither should I venture to affirm it.

Suppose, however, that the case were otherwise, and that the personal and immediate, though invisible presence of Jesus Christ, at every moment of time, with every member of his church upon the earth, were indisputably the doctrine of the gospel, (and if it were so, I can assure Mr. W., whatever opinion he may have formed of Unitarian presumption and incredulity, I should not think myself warranted to reject *the fact*, merely because I could not comprehend the *mode* of it,)—even upon this supposition, from which the want of scriptural evidence alone obliges me to withhold my assent, I should still fear to offer to the invisible Jesus a species of homage which he seems to have expressly forbidden his disciples to present, and which none of his immediate and inspired followers are recorded, in a single instance, to have offered to him. Can Mr. W., or any other Trinitarian, point out the passage in the New Testament which clearly authorizes a direct address to our absent and glorified Lord? The favour and blessing of Jesus, in connection with that of Almighty God, we are indeed permitted to implore; but where is it said that we are permitted to implore them directly of himself? The extension and permanence of

his kingdom,—that blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, may be his,—we are allowed to supplicate; but what authority have we to believe that we are allowed to supplicate them immediately at His hands?

With the exception of those instances in which our Lord appeared personally, or in vision, to his favoured followers, amongst which I must think there is sufficient reason to include that of the dying martyr Stephen,* there is not a single example of a direct address to Jesus after his ascension, much less of such an address as might properly be called a prayer. On the contrary, so far as the records of our faith supply the means of judging, there is, as far as I can see, every reason to believe, that in the first and purest age of the church, our Lord's own injunction was exactly followed. Of him his disciples asked nothing, but every thing of God the Father, in his name. "In every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, they made known their requests unto God," through Jesus Christ.

But what then, it is asked, becomes of all those passages in which Christians are described as *calling upon the name* of the Lord? as in Acts ix. 14. where Ananias, speaking of Saul, says to our Lord—"And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call upon thy name." And again, Acts xxii. 16.—"Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord."† I answer, that even if it could be shown that the invocation spoken of in these passages necessarily implied a direct address to the being whose name was invoked, it would still be rash in us to assume, in opposition to an express precept of our Lord's, the meaning of which cannot be mistaken, that the permission to invoke or to address, implies also the permission to *pray* to him. All the circumstances of the case seem to exclude such an interpretation; to admit it would be to set scripture in direct opposition to itself, and to array the practice of the disciples against the precept of their Master. Were I convinced that the passages referred to evidently authorised a direct address to Jesus, I should still think myself obliged, both by the general connection, and the words of Jesus himself, to regard *prayer*, in the proper sense of that term, by which I mean petition for

* Acts vii. 59. † See also 1 Cor. i. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 22.

future blessings, as well as that profound adoration, that ultimate worship, if I may so express myself, which is due to God only, as necessarily excluded. Even then I should think it my duty, whatever my feelings might prompt, to limit my invocation of my Saviour within those bounds which he has himself seen fit to prescribe. Though permitted to call upon him, (and what Christian would not deem such a permission a privilege?) I should still be of opinion that I was not permitted to call upon him in prayer. His own direction appears to me clear and decisive, "In that day ye shall ask me nothing: verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name he will give it you:" and the conduct of his first followers strongly confirms its meaning and authority.

How can the Trinitarian, I put it solemnly to his conscience, who addresses the Son no less than the Father, as the hearer of *prayer;* who offers up every Lord's day, for instance, such a series of petitions as are found in the Litany of the Established Church,—how can he interpret, or get over the passage above referred to, John xvi. 23? How can he account for it, that not one undoubted instance of prayer to our ascended and invisible Redeemer, is to be found in the New Testament; not a text in which it is said that his disciples *prayed* to him? Whether this could have been the case upon his hypothesis his own practice will help him to determine. Who can read *his* Liturgy, and doubt whether *he* deems it lawful to pray, in the strictest sense of the word, to Jesus Christ? Whence then is it that the scriptures are not as explicitly in favour of this practice? Whence, I should rather ask, that they are directly opposed to it? It is a question surely deserving his most serious consideration.

But to return—such, I have observed, would be my views, as to this unauthorized and unscriptural practice, even if the invocation, spoken of in the class of texts referred to, could be shown to imply a direct address to a being regarded as present. Little or no doubt however remains on my mind, after giving the subject the most careful examination in my power, that this is not the case. I do not mean to say that the invocation, of which the Greek term speaks, may not frequently imply petition. Of this there can be no doubt:—Acts vii. 59. is probably an instance; and others may be found in every part of scripture. All that I maintain is, that it is not always or necessarily so,—that there are

instances, to which I think myself justified in regarding those before us as parallel, in which the original phrase not merely admits but requires a different interpretation. If of two interpretations of a passage, in other respects equally admissible, one harmonizes with the general statements and views of a writer, and the other is at variance with them, it is surely natural to suppose that the former is the most correct.

Now the careful reader of the Old Testament will probably have observed, that, according to a very common form of Hebrew phraseology, the being or person, who assumes a peculiar property in any thing, is represented as calling it by, or giving it a name. Thus in Isaiah xliii. 1. "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel; fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; (εκαλεσα σε το ονομα σου,) thou art mine." Isaiah xlix. i. "The Lord hath called me from the womb; he hath made mention of my name (εκαλεσε το ονομα μου.)" Psalm xlix. 11. "They call their lands after their own names (επεκαλεσαντο τα ονοματα αυτων επι των γαιων αυτων.)"* And as the being who claimed a peculiar property in any thing was said to give it a name, so the thing possessed was frequently said to be called by the name of the possessor. Thus Israel, the ark, the temple, are all said to be called by the name of God. Of this form of speech the examples are very numerous; Deut. xxviii. 10, "And all the people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord (οτι το ονομα κυριου επικεκληται σοι.)" 2 Sam. vi. 2. "And David arose to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the Lord of Hosts. (εφ' ην επεκληθη το ονομα του των δυναμεων επ' αυτης.)" Isaiah iv. 1. "Only let us be called by thy name (το ονομα το σον κεκληθω εφ' ημας.)"† In exact conformity with the phraseology thus instanced, he who makes himself the possession, ranges himself under the standard, devotes himself to the cause or service of another, is said "to call himself by that person's name," or perhaps "to invoke his name, as the name by which he would be called." Of this we have a remarkable instance in Isaiah, xliv. 5. "One shall say I am the Lord's, and another shall *call*

* See also Gen. xxvi. 18—22. Isaiah lvi. 5. lxv. 15.

† See also Gen. xlviii. 16. 1 Kings viii. 43. 2 Chron. vii. 14. Isaiah xiii. 19. Jer. xiv. 9. Dan. ix. 18, 19. Acts xv. 17. James iv. 7.

himself by (according to the Septuagint, *shall call upon*) the name of Jacob; another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel. (και ουτος βοησεται επι τω ονοματι Ιακωβ.....και επι τω ονοματι Ισραηλ βοησεται.)" It is hardly necessary to observe that the Hebrew word translated "βοησεται" in the first clause of the verse, might have been rendered with equal, if not greater propriety, as it is in innumerable other passages, by the Greek verb επικαλουμαι; in which case, the parallelism to the class of texts referred to in the New Testament, would have been as exact as possible. It cannot surely be supposed either that the prophet intended, or that the writer of the Greek version understood him,—to speak of any one who should *worship* Jacob or Israel. (Compare Gen. xlviii. 16.)

Even in those passages in which God himself, the hearer of prayer, is the being spoken of, the term seems to be not unfrequently employed to convey the idea, rather of confession of faith in him, acknowledgment of his authority, and self-consecration to his service, than of prayer: thus Gen. iv. 26. "Then began men *to call upon the name of the Lord.*" Not surely to pray to him, for the assertion would be false, but to invoke his name, if invocation is denoted, as that by which they would be called,—to take his name upon them,—by some solemn act to express their exclusive devotion to his service, and thus to distinguish themselves from those who had already begun to throw off their allegiance, and rebel against their God. Such is the view of this confessedly difficult passage, which, if we may judge from his brief reference to it, (Επικαλουμαι No. 5.) was taken by the learned Schleusner. That it is the true one, seems to me to be confirmed by the observation, that when Abraham builds an altar at Bethel, and plants a grove at Beersheba, and when Isaac builds an altar at Beersheba, they are represented by the historian as *calling upon the name of the Lord.** The mere circumstance of these excellent and pious patriarchs' praying to God, was surely one of too frequent occurrence to be deemed remarkable in itself, or worthy of the historian's particular notice. I should rather suppose that they did then what was first done in the time of Enos, in consequence of the growing prevalence of idolatry. By an act of faith, repeated only on solemn occasions, they took the name of Jehovah upon them,—invoked him as their God, to

* Gen. xii. 8. xiii. 4. xxi. 33. xxvi. 25. See also, and compare Gen. xxviii. 18—22.

the exclusion of every other,—and consecrated themselves, together with the groves which they had planted, or the altars which they had built to his service. Hence in many other parts of scripture, believers are generally designated as those who call upon the name of the Lord, and unbelievers as those who do not call upon his name.* Schleusner accordingly, under the article just referred to, observes that the phrase "επικαλεσθαι τινα vel ονομα τινος" signifies generally "profiteri religionem alicujus, aliquem vere sancte et pie colere;" and he thus translates, or rather paraphrases Acts ii. 21. "omnis quicunque piâ mente amplexus fuerit religionem christianam, felix evadet"—i. e. whosoever shall devoutly embrace the Christian religion shall be saved.

That "calling upon the name of Christ" does not imply any direct devout communion with him, or address of prayer to him, may, I think, be deduced from the very form of expression employed in Acts ix. 21. "But all that heard him were amazed, and said, is not this he that destroyed them who called on *this name* (τους επικαλουμενους το ονομα τουτο.)" Surely if these auditors of Paul had meant to describe the disciples as worshipping Jesus, their expression would not have been "which called on *this name*," but rather "on this Jesus," or at least "on the name of Jesus."† We may speak of invoking, or assuming a name, but hardly of worshipping it.

* See, amongst other passages, Psal. xiv. 4. lxxix. 6. Jer. x. 25. Joel ii. 32. Acts ii. 21. Rom. x. 12, 13, 14. 1 Pet. i. 17. With respect to the application of the prophecy of Joel, in the passages cited from Acts and Romans, it is sufficiently accounted for by the consideration that after the coming of our Lord, the church of God was identical with that of Christ. Thenceforward the true believers in the Father were likewise believers in the Son. He who took upon himself the one name assumed also the other, as he who said "he was Jehovah's" under the old dispensation might also be said "to call himself by the name of Jacob, or the surname of Israel." Is. xliv. 5.

† "I appeal," says the apostle Paul before Festus, Acts xxv. 11. "unto Cæsar"—literally, I invoke, or call upon him (επικαλουμαι.) Here, doubtless, a species of invocation is intended; but it is that of an absent person, and implies no more than the acknowledgment of his authority, and a desire to await his decision. "I stand at Cæsar's judgment seat,"—I invoke his name as that of my lawful judge. Why may not Christians be said to invoke the name of their Lord and Master in a somewhat similar sense,—to acknowledge his authority, and await his final decision in religious matters, as they do that of the supreme civil magistrate in civil affairs?

On the whole, I cannot help thinking that the attentive reader of the scriptures, who shall carefully consider the mode of employing this phrase, both in the Old and the New Testament, will be of opinion, that to call upon the name of Jesus is neither more nor less than to take his name upon us, to invoke it as the name by which we desire to be called, or, in other words, to make a voluntary profession of his religion. "To name the name (ονομαζειν το ονομα) of Christ," is probably a phrase of nearly, if not exactly, similar import. If there be any difference, perhaps it may be this, that the latter denotes, not merely to profess a belief in the name of Christ, but to employ that sacred name, such a belief being presupposed, either in the performance of those acts of power which were wrought by believers in him, or for the accomplishment of any other purpose. (See 2 Tim. ii. 19. and compare Acts xix. 13. iii. 6. 16. Rom. xv. 20.)

If then the class of passages which I have been examining give no countenance to the worship of our ascended and invisible Lord, where shall such countenance be sought? What scriptural authority shall be produced for the practice? What inspired follower of Jesus shall be brought forward to prove that his master had no meaning in his words, when he said "In that day ye shall ask me nothing, but whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he shall give it you"? Mr. Wardlaw resorts for a proof to the Apocalypse.* I am persuaded however that he has not found, and will not find it there. If I am not greatly mistaken there is not a book in the Christian scriptures, which, on a careful perusal, will appear to be more strictly Unitarian than that book; while at the same time it must be granted, that if the doctrine of the Trinity were indeed a true and scriptural doctrine, there, if any where, it might have been expected to shine forth. The very first line, the title and superscription, indicates what every succeeding part proclaims,—the inferiority of the Son to the Father. It is "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass."

It has been said, I know,—and, in one instance,† by a writer for whose talents and character I feel a high and sincere personal respect and regard, and whose error, if such it be, I can only im-

* See Wardlaw's Unitarianism incapable of Vindication, pp. 268—272.

† See the Annual Lecture preached at Heckmondwike, June 17, 1818, by the Rev. R. W. Hamilton, of Leeds.

pute to that haste and inadvertence, under the influence of which we are sometimes liable to mistake a strong impression of what we think likely to happen, for a conviction of what is,—that Unitarians, influenced by their peculiar views, have manifested an inclination to dispute, and a wish to disprove the genuineness and authenticity of this work. This, however, I believe I may safely affirm, is not the fact: so far from it, that I cannot at present call to my mind the name of any Unitarian who has distinguished himself as an opponent to the claims of the book of Revelation, while I *can* recollect distinctly the names of some most distinguished Unitarians who have advocated or admitted both its genuineness and inspiration. To say nothing of Sir Isaac Newton, whose Unitarianism has been, though, I think, without reason, disputed;* or of Evanson, whose authority might be deemed of little value; Lardner, Priestley, and Belsham, are surely witnesses of some weight, whose testimony, when the sentiments of Unitarians are the subject of animadversion, ought not to be altogether overlooked.

Of Lardner, that critic of incorruptible integrity and admirable candour, to whom even-handed justice might, at any time, have entrusted her scales, with a certainty that he would poise them, with an eye as accurate, and a hand as steady as her own,—of Lardner, no one, I am sure, who has read what he has written upon the subject, will pretend to say that he has shown the least disposition to reject the Apocalypse from the sacred canon. He has indeed, as justice required, fairly stated the objections against it, and candidly admitted their force, so far as they appeared to him to possess any; but he has not allowed them the preponderance; on the contrary, his opinion, on the whole, appears to have been, not only that this work was the production of an inspired writer, but also that it was written by the evangelist John himself.† Dr. Priestley, in his notes upon scripture, says of the Apocalypse, that he thinks it impossible for any intelligent and candid person to peruse it, without being convinced, that, "considering the age in which it appeared, none but a person divinely inspired could have written it." And Mr. Belsham, in his "Summary view of the evidence and prac-

* See "a letter to Dr. Chalmers, on the Unitarianism of Sir Isaac Newton, by the Rev. Benjamin Mardon, of Glasgow."

† See Lardner's Works, 4to Vol. i. pp. 633—649. vol. iii. pp. 447—453.

tical importance of the Christian Revelation," gives it, as his opinion, that the Apocalypse has generally "been valued most by those who have examined it with the greatest care, and who therefore ought to be most competent to judge in the case." Socinus, we may also observe, expressly maintained the authority of this book, and ascribed it to the apostle John.* Who those Unitarian writers are, who have stood forward to impugn the Apocalypse, I must profess myself entirely ignorant, having never met with their writings, or even heard of their names,

With respect to the motives imputed to them, I can only say, that the cause of Unitarianism would, in my serious opinion, instead of gaining any thing, lose some strong and unanswerable arguments, by the rejection of that book. Nothing appears to me more strongly marked throughout the whole of it, than the subordination of the son to the Father. To be satisfied of this let the reader peruse it for himself. In doing so, he will not fail to observe, that titles, intimating superior dignity, are given to the Father in many passages, which are not once bestowed upon the Son. He is "the Lord God Almighty (παντοκρατωρ)—that liveth for ever and ever—who is, and who was, and who is to come:" while Jesus is "he that liveth, and *was dead*, and is alive for evermore." The Father is "the Lord God:" Jesus is "the Son of man—the Christ of God—the word of God—and the Lamb." The Father is throughout distinguished from all the other characters of the vision, and particularly from the Lamb, as "He that sitteth *upon* the Throne (επι του θρονου:)" The Lamb is represented as being "in the midst of the throne, in the throne, (ανα μεσον του θρονου, εν τω θρονω)" but never upon the throne.† Jesus speaks

* See Lardner's Works, 4to vol. i. p. 649.

† "There are passages," says Mr. Wardlaw, "in which Jesus the Lamb is plainly and unequivocally described as occupying the same throne as the Eternal: Chapter iii. 21. vii. 15—17. xxii. 1. 3. These texts clearly represent God and the Lamb as occupying the same throne." True—but not as occupying the same part of it. In no one of these passages is the Lamb described as being *upon* the throne. It is strange that Mr. W. should have selected the first of them to prove his point, since he could hardly have directed his readers to a passage more decidedly adverse to his view of the subject. "To him that overcometh," says our Lord, "will I grant to sit with me *in* my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father *in* his throne." To say nothing of the reason here given, for an ex-

of himself as a creature, "the beginning, or chief, of the creation of God," (iii. 14. compare 12.)—deriving from God his knowledge, his power, and his glory (i. 1. ii. 27. iii. 21:) God is spoken of throughout as the Almighty and Eternal Creator; the work of creation being thrice ascribed to him, (iv. 11. x. 6. xiv. 7.) but not once to the Son. Before God the characters of the vision are *often* represented as falling down and *worshipping*; before the Lamb they are represented as falling down, singing a song of grateful praise, and ascribing to him, in union with the Supreme, blessing, and honour, and glory,

altation, to which, according to the Trinitarian hypothesis, he had an inherent and eternal right,—does Mr. W. suppose that Jesus would hold out, to his faithful followers, the promise of sitting with him upon the throne of the Almighty—of becoming colleagues and assessors of the Deity? Yet this must be the meaning of the passage, if the view which he has taken of it be the correct one; unless indeed, he supposes that the preposition "in" (εν) is here used in two different senses, denoting, in its first application, nothing more than "within the precincts of," and in the last, actually "upon." The real state of the case, I should think, is, that both "in," and "in the midst of" (εν and ανα μεσον) mean within that footstool, or floor of the throne which is represented in the description, (iv. 3.) as bounded by a circle like a rainbow or an emerald. Jesus does not promise to his followers that they shall be raised to an equality even with himself, much less with God, but merely that as he, having overcome, was permitted to sit within the precincts of his Father's throne, so should they, overcoming in like manner, within the precincts of his. It is only necessary to add that the expression, in the second passage produced by Mr. W., chap. vii. 15—17, is "in the midst of the throne," (ανα μεσον του θρονου;) and that in the third, xxii. 1. 3, the throne is spoken of as "the throne of God and of the Lamb," doubtless because the station of the Lamb, though beneath that of the Father, was still within the floor or footstool of his throne. I am not willing to impute a want of candour to Mr. W., but he must, I think, have been aware that the large class of persons, who do not take the trouble of examining particularly the statements of their favourite authors, would be very liable to be misled by the manner in which he has expressed himself respecting these passages. It cannot, indeed, be denied that his statement is *verbally* true. The Lamb is represented as *occupying the same throne* with the Father, but not as occupying the same part of it, not as sitting *upon* it: a distinction which Mr. W., for the benefit of his less acute and learned readers, ought, I think, to have marked. That the *occupation* of the same throne does not imply equality, no stronger proof can be required than that to which Mr. W. himself, by quoting chap. iii. 21. has particularly directed our notice. (See Schleusner on the word Θρονος.)

and power; but they are never once said to have *worshipped* him. On the contrary, when John would have worshipped at the feet of the angel or messenger of Jesus, (for I am inclined on this point to agree with Mr. Wardlaw, that it was not Jesus himself, but his messenger to whom this homage was offered,) "See thou do it not," was his earnest exhortation—"worship *God*." He was the messenger of the Lamb, and yet he does not say "worship the Lamb;" he does not even say "worship God and the Lamb;"* but "worship God." Surely then it is a fair inference, that, in that heavenly messenger's estimation, God was the only proper object of religious worship.

Mr. Wardlaw affirms that, in the Apocalyptic vision, the whole creation is represented as adoring and honouring the Lamb in the very same terms in which they adore and honour the Father. The meaning of the word "adore" is here ambiguous: if it mean "to worship," in the sense in which the writer of this book employs the Greek verb "προσκυνεω," I deny the assertion. In this sense it is no where said that the Lamb was *adored*. In this sense, I should think, Mr. Yates could not mean to speak of "adoring throngs." But if, by adoration, Mr. W. means nothing more than is set down by the sacred writer, viz: the ascription of blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, then indeed it must be admitted, that the Lamb is *adored* in the very same terms with the Father. But may not the very same terms, I would ask Mr. W., be employed in a higher and a lower sense? He himself finds it necessary to admit the possibility of this in some instances. How then can he deny it here? He will not surely maintain that blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, admit of no degrees, and cannot therefore be "applied to two objects in the same sentence, with different modifications of meaning." If "worship" may be offered to Jehovah and the King, or to Jehovah and Samuel, in the same sentence, and yet Samuel or the King be inferior to Jehovah, why may not blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be

* How does the Trinitarian account for it that *God* and the Lamb are used as *distinctive* epithets through every part of this work? Upon his hypothesis does not the appropriation of the latter imply the equal applicability of the former, and would not the proper term of distinction have been "*the Father*?" How too can he account for the entire absence of all mention of the third person of the Trinity?

ascribed in the same sentence to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb, and yet the Lamb be inferior to him that sitteth upon the throne. In my opinion the very appellation by which the Father is here distinguished, and which is applied throughout the book, as I have already observed, to him only, is evidently designed to imply his superiority, and indicates therefore, on the part of the "adoring throngs," an express acknowledgment of his claims to a profounder homage. We must express feelings of the same kind by the same words: but they are always understood to vary in intensity, as their objects are more or less calculated to excite them. Who can suppose that the heavenly powers would join in ascribing *equal* praises to the source and to the medium of mercy,—to God himself and "the beginning of the creation of God,"—to him that sitteth upon the throne and to the Lamb in the midst of it.

Mr. Wardlaw inquires whether Unitarians "address their *adorations* TO the Lamb, or only express their sentiments OF him." I answer without hesitation for myself, and I believe I may also say, for the great majority of our body, that we deem the latter only allowable, and that we rest the defence of *our* practice in this respect on the precepts and practice of our Master and his immediate followers. We could not, I admit, join in the adorations and *prayers*, which our fellow Christians are in the habit of addressing directly to our glorified Lord, without something more than "inward fears, and jealousies, and misgivings of mind,"—without the direct reproaches of conscience, accusing us of departing from the written word, and wilfully violating the law of God, which, as we understand it, strictly commands us to address our prayers to the Father, and to him only, in the name of the Son. Our scruples, even if they be weak and groundless, are, I trust, conscientious; and if conscientious, I am sure that they deserve the forbearance at least, if not the respect, of every candid and pious mind.

Our sentiments of gratitude, reverence, and love for our Saviour, will not, I humbly hope, be weakened by a scrupulous compliance with what we deem his will; nor can I believe that the worship, which, in his name, we offer up, with sincere devotion, to his Father and our Father, his God and our God, will find less acceptance with him, because it is not, in opposition to his own precepts, offered directly to himself. The time, I doubt not, *will* arrive, may it arrive speedily, when Mr. Wardlaw, whatever

suspicions he may now feel on the subject, shall be convinced that there is no anthem of praise, no song of religious joy, in which the rest of God's creation can piously unite, in which the sincere and consistent Unitarian Christian cannot humbly, gratefully, fervently, and devoutly join. To his own master every one of us must stand or fall. We await his decision, certain that it will be just, anxious that it may be favourable, but feeling, I trust, no wish that it may be less so to those who differ from us, than to ourselves. Of both may it be found that their errors have been involuntary; and of both, that in their few things they have been faithful!

NOTE H. PAGE 32.

I ought not, perhaps, to leave unnoticed the only direct testimony to the omniscience of our Lord which Mr. Wardlaw professes to produce from scripture. It is found in the answer of Peter to Jesus, when grieved because his master had said unto him, the third time, "Lovest thou me?" he fervently replied, "Lord, *thou knowest all things;* thou knowest that I love thee." "Here," says Mr. W., "is *one thing* which Peter was confident his master knew; and his assurance that he knew *this* thing is founded on his assurance that he knew *all things*. But without noticing, for the present, the *nature* of the *one* thing spoken of, unless the term *all* be here used in its universal sense, the inference of the apostle is a complete *non-sequitur*, and his confidence rests on no solid ground."*

Would not any one, unacquainted with the subject of the preceding comment, have supposed that Mr. W. was examining some regular syllogistic argument, consisting of major and minor premise, and conclusion? The very mention of a "*non-sequitur*," in such a connexion, appears to me to have a ludicrous effect, and when I read of "Peter's argument," and the "inference of the apostle," and the "venerable penitent's reasoning," I confess I feel some difficulty in conceiving that Mr. W. and myself, have the same passage in view. Peter seems to me to have felt rather than reasoned. He was well acquainted with our Lord's knowledge of the human heart; he had, doubtless, witnessed many striking proofs of it; from his own experience he knew that the eye of Jesus, "all mist from thence

* See Wardlaw's Unitarianism incapable of Vindication, pp. 218—220.

purged and dispersed," could search out the secrets of the bosom; at the same time, he was conscious that the attachment, which he had just professed, was sincere,—and that there was no thought within, at the moment, which he wished to conceal from that penetrating eye; he was grieved, therefore, at the third repetition of the question, which seemed to imply a doubt of his sincerity, and appealed, with natural warmth, to our Lord himself, as to one who "knew what was in man, and needed not that any should testify"—"Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." If the penitent apostle felt persuaded that nothing was hidden from our Lord which he desired to know, that the hearts of men were open to his inspection, and that he could, at that moment, read all that was passing in his own: such a persuasion, on his part, was surely abundantly sufficient,—without supposing that he meant to reason formally from the omniscience of our Lord,—to justify the strong expression which he used.

Allowing, however, that the earnest and affecting appeal of Peter may be properly designated a strict logical deduction, is not Mr. W. unnecessarily scrupulous? I should have thought that from the complete knowledge of one subject, the knowledge of a particular branch of it might, with safety, have been inferred, and that the apostle's reasoning would have been conclusive, though no more had been intended by it than this—"Lord, thou knowest what is in man,—the secrets of the heart cannot be concealed from thee,—thou readest there what thou pleasest,—the Father showeth thee all things,—what need, then, that I should testify of myself?—thou seest—thou knowest that I love thee." But this, in Mr. W.'s opinion, would be "a complete non-sequitur." "*All* must be here used in its universal sense, or the confidence of the apostle rests on no solid ground:" According to which view of the subject, not even the perfect knowledge of this planet, and all that passes on its surface,—no, not even the knowledge of the whole solar system itself, in all its parts, would have been sufficiently comprehensive to include, with certainty, this one particular. From our Lord's absolute *omniscience* only, could his knowledge of Peter's heart have been certainly inferred! Is it not strange that Mr. W. should, at one time, be so bold a reasoner, as to infer our Lord's knowledge of all things from his knowledge of many; and at another time so very scrupulous, as to reject an inference from his knowledge of

many things to his knowledge of one contained in that many? How is this unnatural union of rashness and timidity, in the same mind, to be accounted for? Simply by the fact that the *omniscience* of our Lord is to be proved *at all events*; if possible, by an unwarrantably bold inference from his knowledge of many things; or if not, by an unreasonably cautious adherence to the letter, though not the spirit of a text, which seems to affirm his knowledge of all things.

"Mr. Yates," says Mr. W., "speaks with mighty confidence of the argument from the words of Peter to Christ, being entirely destroyed by the application of the very same language to Christians in general, by the author of this gospel, 1 John ii. 20. Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and *ye know all things*." I have carefully read Mr. W.'s remarks on Mr. Yates's observation, and though he says that "a very slender portion of acumen is requisite" for the purpose, I must confess that I cannot discover that "essential difference," of which he speaks, between the passages thus quoted, and in my opinion justly, as parallel. In both cases the terms made use of are general; and in both, as it appears to me, their meaning is limited by the connexion. Mr. W. himself, though he contends that the apostle's words convey "an unqualified ascription of omniscience," admits, nevertheless, and even censures Mr. Yates for not adverting to the circumstance, that Peter "more *immediately* refers to *a particular description of knowledge*." The apostle, he allows, had a "*more especial* reference to our Lord's knowledge of the secrets of all hearts." "More immediately," and "more especial," I grant, are convenient words for Mr. W.'s purpose; but can he prove that they are necessary, as well as convenient? Can he show that the apostle actually had a remote, as well as an immediate,—a universal, as well as an especial reference? Can he prove that when Peter said, "Lord, thou knowest *all things*," he meant more than "all things connected with the present subject of my thoughts," or "all things that it may be thy pleasure and will to know?" If the meaning of the phrase "all things," may in other cases be limited by the context, which the passage produced by Mr. Yates abundantly proves, and which Mr. W. does not deny, how can Mr. W. assume, without a gross petitio principii, that it is not so limited in this instance? If, indeed, it could have been shown, by *independent* evidence, that the apostle Peter was a believer in the omniscience of Jesus, there

might then have been some reason to suppose that his words were designed to convey a recognition of such belief. But standing by themselves, they cannot possibly prove any thing; since it is allowed that their meaning *may* be modified by the connection; which, consequently, upon the Unitarian hypothesis, it *must* be. "Thou knowest all things," is a confession which could not be addressed to a finite being in any other than a restricted sense.

Should any, however, be of opinion that the fervent apostle did actually believe in the deity and omniscience of Jesus, and that his faith in that doctrine may, therefore, be recognized in the passage before us, let me recommend to such persons the careful perusal of the discourses of Peter, recorded in the book of Acts,* and delivered *after this period*, at a time when his mind was further enlightened by the gift of the Holy Spirit; and if they can point out in them, or in the epistles of the same writer, any passages clearly indicating such a belief on the part of the apostle, I will allow thatthey are not without some appearance of authority for their interpretation of this passage. It is surely incredible that Peter should have held and professed such a doctrine before our Lord's ascension, and not have repeatedly insisted upon it afterwards in the course of his public ministrations.

And here it may be remarked, as a circumstance well deserving the serious attention of the candid inquirer, that no clear enunciation; I think I may go farther, and say, no trace, however faint, of what are now called the *peculiar* doctrines of the gospel, can be found through the whole of that book of scripture to which I have just referred,—not even in those discourses of the apostles, delivered after they had received the Holy Spirit, in which they profess to deliver, to Jews and Gentiles, the great leading truths of the gospel. I would ask any serious and intelligent Christian to read the book of Acts throughout, with attention and candour, and then leave it to himself to determine whether those doctrines, which modern teachers and missionaries, of what are called orthodox sentiments, openly profess to make the beginning and end, the sum and substance of their instructions, were either inculcated or implied in the apostolical discourses of Peter and Paul, and their associates?—whether these great

* See Acts ii. 14—40. iii. 12—26. iv. 8—12. 23—30. v. 29—33. x. 34—43.

primitive teachers appear, in a single instance, to have preached Christ to the heathen, in the pseudo-evangelical sense of that phrase, as an omniscient God, and an infinite sacrifice?—Whether, on the contrary, it might not be expected that if discourses, precisely similar in matter to those which the apostles delivered, were to be preached in some modern pulpits, the cry of heresy would be immediately raised, and the accusation of wilfully suppressing the great peculiarities of Christian doctrine loudly preferred?

But to return, having, I trust, shown that the words of Peter cannot be regarded as containing any recognition, on the part of the apostle, of the doctrine of our Lord's absolute omniscience, and that Mr. W.'s inference from them is, consequently, "a non-sequitur:" I would notice, in conclusion, the argument for that doctrine which Mr. W. would derive from our Lord's intimate knowledge of the human heart. That God is the searcher of hearts—that the underived and perfect knowledge of the hearts of men is his peculiar prerogative, is granted without a dispute. But where is it said, in scripture, that knowledge of this kind cannot be communicated, or that God has not power to impart it, in a finite degree, to whom he pleases? Mr. W., I am sure, cannot point out the passage. That such knowledge *was* imparted to Jesus, and to a great extent, the testimony of scripture leaves us no room to doubt. Nor am I disposed to question, when the evangelist informs us, that "he knew what was in man, and needed not that any should testify," that he speaks of a more than human knowledge, of an insight into the heart, which no experience or observation, no knowledge of human nature, in the common acceptation of those words, could have given him. It was, doubtless, by divine power, that Jesus was enabled to read the secrets of the breast. It was by that power that he saw Nathaniel beneath the fig-tree, and discerned the penitence of the paralytic, whose sins he pronounced forgiven before he healed him. Jesus had power to read the heart, and to forgive sins, but it was a derived power, enjoyed by him as the son and prophet of the Most High. Jesus himself has given the true account of the matter.—Matt. ix. 6. "But that ye may know that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, then, saith he to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed and go unto thine house." The power to work miracles proved the power to forgive sins—and why? be-

cause the same being who enabled him to heal the diseases of the body, could also enable him to read the thoughts of the mind, to discern the reality of repentance, and to pronounce the sins of the penitent forgiven. The guileless Nathaniel drew the right inference from our Lord's possession of such power—"Rabbi," he exclaimed, "thou art *the Son of God*, thou art the King of Israel."

With respect to the particular passage in the Apocalypse, on which Mr. W. lays so much stress*—chap. ii. 23. it seems to me of little or no consequence, whether the expression "I am he that searcheth," be regarded as a Hebraism or not; probably it is, and certainly Mr. W.'s quotation from Vigerus has not the least tendency to prove the contrary: but whatever opinion may be formed on this point, it is evident that here, as on every other occasion, the Son means to represent himself as the subordinate agent and instrument of the Father. If he is *the* searcher of hearts to the churches—*the* judge of the world, it is because God has appointed *him*, and no other being, to that high office;—because he is the only authorised visible representative of that invisible God, who is *in his own right*, and *in the highest sense*, the Searcher and the Judge. What does our Lord himself say, in the conclusion of that very address to the church of Thyatira, in which the passage referred to is found, chap. ii. 26. "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: as the vessels of a potter they shall be broken to shivers: *even as I received of my Father*." Doubtless he *received of his Father* the power to search and try, as well as to punish and reward. We cannot, therefore, infer the omniscience of Jesus either from the expression of his apostle, "Lord, thou knowest all things;" or from his possessing "that particular species of knowledge, to which the apostle more immediately referred, the knowledge of the human heart."

* See Wardlaw's Unitarianism incapable of Vindication, pp. 213—216.

FINIS.

Edward Baines, Printer, Leeds.

PUBLISHED BY THE SAME AUTHOR,

PIETY and VIRTUE the only Terms of final Acceptance with God.—A Sermon, preached on Wednesday, May 12th, 1819, at the Unitarian Chapel, Bradford, before the Presbyterian Ministers and Tract Society, of the West-Riding of Yorkshire.

THE HISTORY OF CHRIST, A TESTIMONY TO THE SOLE DEITY OF THE FATHER:

AND

THE CONNEXION BETWEEN DIVINE AND HUMAN PHILANTHROPY.

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED ON THE MORNING AND EVENING

OF

Sunday, September 14, 1823,

AT

THE OPENING OF THE UNITARIAN CHAPEL,

YOUNG STREET, CHARLOTTE SQUARE,

EDINBURGH.

By W. J. FOX.

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MORNING SERMON.

My Unitarian Friends,

I sincerely and warmly congratulate you on the interesting event which has now called us together; an event alike honourable to you and propitious to the cause of Christian truth. If the remains, or results, of long-continued illness enfeeble and abridge my attempt to do justice to the occasion, (and at best, O how unequal should I have felt myself to that!) you will bear with me in the conviction, not only that I speak from the heart, but that in this country, and in England, there are many, many thousand hearts responsive to every word I utter of congratulation, of encouragement, and of hope. They applaud by me your conscientious dissent from prevalent forms of faith and worship; the manliness with which that dissent has been avowed and acted upon, in very disadvantageous circumstances; the determination, as your prospects brightened and your resources increased, to secure more fitting accommodation for yourselves and those who might habitually or occasionally assemble with you; the perseverance with which your object has been pursued, and the prudence which has so happily ensured its accomplishment, and in which you have given an example worthy of all imitation by congregations similarly situated. They also hope that you have

thus done something towards opening a free course for the Gospel, that it may be glorified. And it is well that in this country, and in this metropolis, such a testimony should be borne to truth as you bear; and for the progress of truth such a provision made as you make, by the erection of this building, which we now solemnly dedicate to the sole worship of the One God the Father, and the preaching of the Gospel of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. It is well that here, where the Reformation was so much more popular in its adoption, vigorous in its spirit, and extensive in its results, than in England, an effort should be made to carry on that great work to the consummation, in which alone it can rest, of the revival of the genuine Christian doctrines of the Unity and Love of God. It is well that here, where learning and science have fixed their favoured seat, men should be invited to the knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, which is life eternal; and to the study of the uncorrupted and unperverted Scriptures, which make wise unto salvation. It is well that here, where unbelief is said, I know not how truly, to prevail among the intelligent classes, Christianity should be exhibited apart from those human additions and inventions which have marred its loveliness, degraded its character, embittered its spirit, and thrown a ponderous mass of incredibility into the scale against its evidences. It is well that here, where Trinitarian and Calvinistic dogmas have wielded so widely and sternly

their iron sceptre, free inquiry should be roused to break their bonds, and emancipate their captives; that to guide them out of the mazes of that bewildering system a beacon should be kindled and set on high, or rather, that the light of heaven should arise upon them; that to succour them under the gloomy inflictions of that system, the glad tidings of gospel simplicity should bring redemption; and that the banner should be raised in that holy warfare of truth with error, which allows neither peace nor truce till the Lord be King over all the earth, and there be One Lord, and his name One. It is well that here, where there must be many seeking for knowledge, you should provide for their instruction; where there must be many secretly convinced, to some extent, of the truth of your opinions, you should afford facilities for their open profession; where there must be many friendly to your cause, you should invite their co-operation. And it is well also that you should thus consult your own improvement, practise your own mode of worship, and assert your own faith, seeing that you are disciples of Him whose words, as declaratory of your duty, and expressive of your purpose, I now read from the Gospel of JOHN, ch. xviii. ver. 37:

"TO THIS END WAS I BORN, AND FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I INTO THE WORLD, THAT I SHOULD BEAR WITNESS UNTO THE TRUTH."

IT is unnecessary to detain you with any discussion of the argument for the pre-existence of Christ,

which some have derived from the second clause of this verse, as you will readily observe that their interpretation, by identifying its meaning with that of the first clause, ascribes to our Lord a very improbable repetition; and also that he had but a short time before employed nearly the same phrase to describe both his own mission, and that of his apostles: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John xvii. 18.) It is of more importance to notice, in passing, that the occasion of his declaring the end of his existence and mission, was the assertion, or insinuation, that he aspired to temporal power and sovereignty. He repels the charge by avowing himself a teacher of truth, and Pilate accepts the reason, merely demanding in return, "What is truth?" i. e. What care I about your speculations or teachings, so long as you make no assumption of political authority? The professed followers of Christ have too often argued the matter in a very different way, and have inferred that *because* they testified the truth, they had a right, either to possess temporal authority, or to have it exerted for their purposes. They have claimed, and that successfully, that as teachers of truth they should be vested with lordly titles, and rear their mitred fronts in courts and senates; that the people should be taxed for their support; that the stake, or when the milder spirit of the times disallowed this, that penalties and dungeons should avenge opposition to them; and that nations should

espouse their quarrels, and armies fight their battles. This is not more alien from the reasoning of Christ, than from the spirit of his gospel.

Christ bore witness to Unitarian Christianity. I assert this without fear of contradiction. He taught expressly every principle which we hold; and his followers, of all times, in all countries, through all sects, have borne involuntary testimony to the assertion; for not one of those principles have they dared to deny in words, although they have virtually denied them all by additions more or less inconsistent with their truth, destructive of their evidence, and hostile to their spirit. He taught and we hold the Divine Unity as the basis of revealed religion.—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." They deny it not, but assert a Trinity, which makes it unimportant and unmeaning. He taught and we hold the Divine Paternity, continually calling, and teaching others to call God, the Father. They retain the term, but restrict its relation to the second person of the Trinity, or to the elect, or by some other fanciful limitation. He taught, and we believe him, his own humanity. "Ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God." They allow it, but maintain that the man was personally one with God. He inculcated, and we practise, the worship of the Father. "When ye pray, say, Our Father." They say so, sometimes at least; but they also go on to say, "O God the Son," "God the Holy Ghost," or "Holy,

blessed, and glorious Trinity." He taught the salvation of man by the free grace of God, in the parable of the Prodigal Son; and they interpolate the purchase of that grace by an atonement. He declared that virtue is the passport to heaven. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." They cannot directly controvert the declaration even while contending for salvation by faith alone. He announced the infliction of proportionate punishment for offences. "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." And they assent, yet make every sin infinite, and all punishment eternal. He anticipated universal benefits from his exertions and sufferings, announcing himself as "the Saviour of the world," and declaring that he would draw all men unto him; and they allow the justice of the description, and the truth of the prophecy, but reduce all to a few, and the world to a party. We take his instructions; we leave their unauthorized additions. We bear witness *for* the first, because they are God's truth; *against* the last, because they are man's inventions.

The object of worship is the topic to which our attention is especially directed by the present occasion. We adore the Father only; in the religious

services of other Christians, the Son and the Holy Ghost are associated with him. For the worship of the Holy Ghost there is confessedly neither precept nor example in Scripture. As to that of the Son, Christ is himself a clear and decisive witness. I have adverted, and shall again, to his language on this subject; but it is not my design to dwell upon particular expressions or detached texts. I appeal to facts; to his whole history as recorded in the New Testament. This is the single argument which I shall urge. Those facts bear unequivocal testimony that the Father is, and that Christ is not, the only God and object of adoration. Let the inquirer take the gospels, and imagine a being conscious that he was the most High God in human shape, and ask whether the emotions and actions of Jesus, there recorded, were those of such a being, or not rather those of a man, placed in circumstances the most extraordinary, raised up and qualified of heaven to be the Saviour of the world? The answer, on a fair review of the transactions of our Lord's life and ministry, is, to my mind, obvious and final.

Whether the birth of Christ was miraculous, is of little moment. If it were, so was that of John the Baptist, of Samuel, of Isaac, and the formation of Adam, whom Luke therefore calls the Son of God. There are many weighty objections to the initial chapters of Matthew; and some, less forcible, to those of Luke; but they are critical, not theological. No doctrine depends on our regarding them

as conclusive or inconclusive. Whatever were the circumstances, Christ *was born*. Even in the narrative most strongly suspected, that which is ascribed to Matthew, there is nothing calculated to impress on the minds of friends, relatives, or neighbours, that the infant was personally one with the Deity; that he was an incarnation of Jehovah. It was not till ages after, that Mary was styled "Mother of God." What an expression! as if she actually carried infinity in her bosom, gave existence to eternity, and held Omnipotence in her arms! Modern Trinitarians shrink from such language, and well they may. Yet what becomes of their faith, unless the birth of Christ was the birth of God, and the mother of Christ the mother of God? At any rate, they allow that although Christ possessed two natures, he was but one person, and that person, the history tells us, was born. Tell any one whose notions of deity are above those of Heathenism, that you bring him an account of a person who was born, and he can have no hesitation in inferring from that single fact, that the person in question was not God.

The narrative ascribed to Luke states that, in his youth, Christ "increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favour with God and man." (ii. 52.) Trinitarians say, "as to his human nature." The writer says no such thing; and the fact, unless so modified, is fatal to their hypothesis. If the human nature formed but one person with the divine nature, there

could be no accession to his wisdom. From the moment of that union he must have been perfect in knowledge. That the deity gradually filled the humanity, as the latter was able to bear it, (the explanation sometimes advanced of this passage,) is a notion destructive of the doctrine of the proper deity of Christ; for humanity never could receive unlimited knowledge, nor the finite ever expand to the comprehension of the infinite. Is it said that the writer only speaks of appearances? And how came they to detect, under those illusory appearances, the reality which escaped him and his authorities? Will they argue that the growth in stature, recorded in the same sentence, was mere appearance also? And by what figure of speech could God be said to grow in favour with himself? Is it supposed that, possessing infinite wisdom, the youthful Christ concealed its extent, and regulated its exhibition so as to manifest it gradually, like other children, and seem to enlarge his acquirements as they do? Had the writer meant this, he could have been at no loss for words to express his meaning. The supposition itself can scarcely be stated without reprobation, for it imputes to Christ a degree of management almost amounting to duplicity, in order to save the doctrine of his deity from instant confutation.

At the baptism of Christ, the Holy Spirit descended upon him, like a dove, and the voice of God proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Such a declaration is the language

of a superior. It expresses approbation and invests with authority. By pointing out Jesus as the Son of God, or the Messiah, the Jews were commanded to receive his instructions. The descent of the Spirit was the gift of that which, had the Son been God, would have belonged to him before. He who expresses public and authoritative approval of another, entrusts him with a commission, and confers on him a donation, must be greater than that other. The transaction is demonstrative of the inferiority of the Son to the Father.

Christ was then tempted in the wilderness. Whether by the devil personally, or in vision, or by a human tempter, or whether the narrative be only a figurative description of his own reflections at that anxious and important period, I shall not now inquire. Whatever interpretation be adopted, still it was a *temptation*. There having been no witnesses, and the account therefore coming from himself, or by revelation, to the evangelists, its description by that term is decisive. It was not only so intended, as when men are said to tempt God, but it was so felt, and rebutted by better thoughts and scriptural principles. He was tempted, not like as God is, but "in all points like as we are;" (Heb. iv. 15;) not in design or imagination only, but in reality. The record is one of human feelings, struggles, and success. Is it God that is to be threatened with delusion, bribed with glory, moved with hunger, awed by danger, that triumphs in resistance, and is cheered

by the ministration of angels? In this sense, God cannot be tempted, but Christ was, and was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Whatever be said of his natures, he was the subject of a trial to which Deity cannot be exposed.

He frequently engaged in acts of devotion, and sometimes retired for that purpose, when his object could not be (according to the explanation which has been given of other instances) merely to set an example to his followers. A praying deity is an inconceivable combination. Why should *he* pray who was conscious of being the Lord of all power and might? And to whom? He had, at most, but equals. So far as his prayers are preserved, they are those of a man. Free as he was from sin, they contain not the confessions which we use; but in all else they shew the devout workings of the human heart. They comprise acknowledgments of superior power and sole divinity in the person addressed,* praises for the gracious displays of his presence and favour,† earnest petitions for protection and deliverance, and pious expressions of filial confidence.‡ They shew the ebbs and flows, the risings and subsidings of human emotion; not the tideless ocean of infinity.

He always prayed to the Father; never to the Holy Ghost, never to the Trinity, never to his own

* John x. 21, xvii. 3. † John xi. 41, xvii. 2, 26.
‡ John xii. 27, 28; Matt. xxvi. 39.

supposed divine nature, which, if there be any truth in the position that he prayed as man, not as God, he surely might have done, and would have done for the sake of affording instruction and example on a subject where they were most needed. If he received homage, (rendered "worship," but originally so rendered when the English word, like the Greek, included various kinds of regard, religious and civil,) it was not divine homage, for they who proffered it could have no suspicion of his godhead. He was, it is probable, occasionally present with the Apostle Paul, who refers to petitions to him. And when Stephen committed his spirit to him, as the appointed reviver of the dead, he distinguished the act from one of adoration, by afterwards kneeling down in prayer to God for the pardon of his murderers. While he was personally with his disciples, either before or after his resurrection, requests could with propriety be made to him, as a divinely-commissioned Teacher, which when he was taken from them would amount to worship; these, therefore, he solemnly prohibited. "In that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." (John xvi. 23.) There is then no scriptural obstruction to the fair inference from his conduct, which is only that we should obey his injunction, and when we pray say, Our Father.

Man is not more distinguished by his form than by his feelings from those who are above or below

him in the great chain of being. Many of these arise from his very ignorance, and are modifications of surprise. Others result from that infirmity which prevents his always having in mind the great principles which yet his reason recognizes. They cannot be experienced by Him who knows the end from the beginning, and who does all things. They are only ascribed to him by a bold figure. The ascription of them to Christ is not of this sort, nor is it consistent with his being God. The very emotions, as felt by him, with their appropriate expressions, are matter of history. He "rejoiced in spirit" at the success of his disciples. He glowed with honest indignation at the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. He melted into tears at the grave of Lazarus. Individuals of peculiar amiability he loved. For the wretched he had sympathy. His soul was "troubled," and "exceeding sorrowful," as calamity thickened around him. The approach of death thrilled his exhausted frame with agony. On the cross he stayed his sinking mind by prayer. What ideas of divinity must they have who believe the individual who was conscious of all this, to have also been conscious that he had created the world, that he was then supporting all things, and that his every word or wish was omnipotent!

As a Teacher we find him asserting the sole deity of the Father, his own reception from God of wisdom and power, and his inability to do any thing of himself. Before his greatest miracle, the raising of

Lazarus, he solemnly and publicly appeals to Him who heard him always, a phrase which intimates the fact, that on such occasions he always prayed. He taught any thing rather than his own deity; and when the Jews made his assumption of the title *Son of God* the occasion of a charge against him, he repelled it, on the Unitarian principle, by shewing that the higher appellation, *God*, was bestowed in Scripture upon human beings on account of the offices which they filled. John x. 34—36.

Go with him, Trinitarian, to the garden of Gethsemane; behold him there, appalled for a moment by the horrors of his destiny; appealing to his disciples for the consolation of human sympathy;* reiterating his prayer that the cup might pass from him; sweating as it were great drops of blood; and at length strengthened by an angel, and nerving his mind for the dreadful conflict. See him again, on the cross, his piety for a moment clouded,† but bursting to its wonted brightness as the lamp of life expired. See him entombed. Are these demonstrations of an essential and personal oneness with the Deity? Are they compatible with that doctrine? Does not Trinitarianism require, not merely that sacred history should be written in other words, but that its materials should consist of another and very different course of events?

We will not stop here. Proceed as far as the

* Matt. xxvi. 40. † Matt. xxvii. 46.

New Testament will guide you, and still the impression is the same. Behold him rising from the grave; but how? By the spirit of God, by the power of the Father. So the fact itself intimates, for on the revival of a dead body we naturally look for some external and sufficient cause; and so the sacred writers repeatedly declare. They confirm our inference. Who shall put aside these obvious and authoritatively assigned causes, to substitute their own reverie of his inherent deity?

He is honoured and exalted; by whom? God gives him a name, power, a seat at his own right hand, and a revelation,* (which therefore he had not before,) communicating that knowledge of the day of judgment which he had previously disclaimed,† and, by disclaiming, pledged his veracity to the limited nature of his information, and of course to the negation of his deity. It was the crucified man that was made both Lord and Christ.‡ The derivation of all his honours from a superior is a substantive part of the scriptural record of the dignity to which he is advanced.

High as that dignity may be, when all things are put under him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under him.§ When the loftiest praises are offered, it is to him that died, not to one that could not die; || and in the final con-

* Rev. i. 1. † Mark xiii. 32. ‡ Acts ii. 36.
§ 1 Cor. xv. 27. || Rev. v. 9, 12.

summation of that dispensation of mercy of which he is the constituted head, the Son himself shall be subject to the Father, that God may be all in all.*

And let him now be all in all to us, as the sole author of our blessings, and object of our adorations. The witness of Christ's life and ministry to the truth of the sole deity of the Father, is not more decisive of his claims than of our duties. Our lives also should bear witness to truth, by firmness in its profession, zeal in its diffusion, and conformity with its requirements.

I. Be consistent and firm in its profession. Our religious opinions are no vague speculation, but the plain dictates of reason and of scripture. They rest not on niceties of language, or learned criticisms, but are distinctly proclaimed by the voice of sacred history; and are embodied not only in the words, but in the facts of the New Testament. I see not how the argument from the life of Christ can be rebutted or evaded. It will not avail for the Trinitarian to reply, that, in the particulars adduced, Christ spoke, felt, acted, suffered, or was exalted, *as man*, for if that man were one with God, he could not have so spoken, felt, acted, suffered, or been exalted. The union with omniscience, omnipotence, and supremacy, would have rendered it impossible. His deity is negatived, and consequently the sole deity of the Father established, not by the reading of a

* 1 Cor. xv. 24, 28.

text, or the version or interpretation of a phrase, but by the spirit of the whole narrative. And as the evidence of this, our distinguishing tenet, that religious homage is due to the Father only, is most ample, so is the principle itself most important. It should seem, generally, I think, that in so momentous a concern as religion, it is the duty of every man, his duty to God and truth, to avow his convictions. At any rate, Christ has decided the question for his followers. Other teachers and religions may allow temporizing in dangerous circumstances; he makes no such allowance in the utmost extremity. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, which is in heaven." The duty of profession can scarcely be more obligatory as to the mission of Jesus than as to the object of worship. The latter subject involves (which the former does not always) the formation of separate religious assemblies. On very many points the frequenters of the same house of prayer may agree to differ; but as to this there can be no compromise. The Christians worshiped with the Jews until the latter expelled them from the synagogues; but with the Gentiles never. As to them, apostolic language was (and it applies to us, for whatever Trinitarianism be in itself, or to its believers, to us it most assuredly is idolatry) "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord." If Christ be not the

supreme being, imperative as to our secession from those who adore him is the command "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Other Dissenters may have a satisfactory plea for separation, but ours is compelled by a paramount necessity. It is at the peril of the reprobation of our consciences, and the anticipated frown of our Judge, that we sanction, by word or deed, the adoration of beings who, to us, are no gods.

By thus openly adhering to the worship which he practised and enjoined, we best shew our veneration for Christ. And he *is* the object of our veneration, and of our love. Not indeed on Trinitarian, but on scriptural principles; not for possessing a divine nature, or for becoming incarnate, or for making an infinite satisfaction to avenging justice; but for enduring the cross, despising the shame, and bringing life and immortality to light; for proclaiming with his lips, and sealing with his blood, and confirming by his miracles, and announcing to the world, by his apostles, the gospel of the grace of God, the Universal Father. Ill do we shew our love or veneration towards him, if we rob the Father of the honours of his nature, the glories of his benevolence; or even if we tamely regard the prevalence of errors which have that effect; for truth requires of us

II. Zeal for its diffusion. Justly did the Evangelist apply to Christ the language of the Psalmist, "The zeal of thine house hath consumed me."

Christianity was originally characterized by its proselyting spirit. The Acts of the Apostles is a continued record of its inextinguishable nature, extensive operations, and wonderful results. In the minds of the apostles the desire of life seemed to be absorbed in the stronger desire of promoting the Christian cause, and the fear of death was overcome by the stronger fear of not serving that cause to the extent of their ability. The common apprehensions which, especially in despotic times and countries, must have been felt in their presence, whose words were law, and whose will was fate, became as nothing; and a manly though modest testimony was borne before the proudest of the powers that were, to the crucified one of Nazareth. The sneers of the learned did not abash, the fury of the multitude did not terrify, the mandate of the powerful could not silence them. Prosperity could not relax, nor adversity chill them into inaction. They sought out the scattered inhabitants of the wilderness; they cried aloud in the streets of the crowded city; they reasoned from the books of Moses in Jewish synagogues, and appealed to the sublimity of nature on the Areopagus of Athens. They wrote, and preached, and pleaded. They attacked alike the bigotry of the Jews, and the idolatry of the Gentiles. In all stations, from the noblest palace to the gloomiest dungeon; in all countries where travel could bring, or winds and waves could waft them; through all receptions, whether priests prepared the sacrifice to

worship them as gods, or executioners bared the knife to sheath it in their bosoms, they pursued the same object, their whole souls, indifferent to all that attracts, contemptuous to all that terrifies, bent on the work of proselyting the world to Christianity.

Was this spirit designed to be peculiar to their times and them? Should no portion of it descend on us, as believers in what we deem the pure gospel, so generally and so grossly corrupted? That Christ made its exercise the duty of his apostles; that they infused it into their disciples; that it became a distinctive mark of the religion; these are all presumptions of its permanence, although undoubtedly different circumstances may render it improper. Whether they do so, in this case, is best ascertained by the enumeration of those circumstances. That Trinitarianism is immeasurably superior to the licentiousness and vice of Gentile idolatry, is gladly granted. Still what is it, as compared with the Gospel? In the confusion of its worship, its gloomy representations of the Divine character, and the repulsive terrors of the doctrines of satisfaction, reprobation, and endless misery, we see enough to rouse our feelings and animate our efforts. That we alike bear the Christian name, and appeal to the Christian Scriptures, is an advantage that should inspire confidence, and not a consummation in which we ought contentedly to rest. We have not miraculous powers. Let us, then, diligently employ what powers we do possess. We are not exposed to the worst

horrors of persecution. Then the timid need not fear; and the bold, meeting with fewer obstacles, may accomplish greater results. We have no divine commission; but we have the words of Christ, which were their commission. Of the difficulties, some may leave the question where it was; but some confirm the duty, and none are fatal to its obligation. Is it said, Truth must prevail? Let us leave its advance to Providence? This might have been said then, and it would have been said in vain. How does truth prevail, how does Providence generally make it triumphant, but by human agency? By the statement of its evidences, the illustration of its loveliness, the exposure of error, the excitement of attention, and all that indicates the spirit of proselytism? How was the Reformation achieved? How did Unitarianism revive? If truth in theology is to be left to itself, why not truth in morals, in politics, in philosophy? Why not abstain from reprehending the drunkard or adulterer, because righteousness must prevail? Why not let power unheeded trample upon right, because freedom must prevail? Why not bid the philosopher burn his volumes, stop his researches, dash to atoms the apparatus of his experiments, because science must prevail? Why not let misery perish, and withhold the pittance of relief, because charity must prevail?

In your manly profession of the faith that God is One, and God is Love, in opposition to those who,

assenting in words, make by human admixtures the expression of those glorious doctrines little better than unmeaning sounds; in the judicious yet decided and persevering measures by which you have succeeded in raising this temple to the Father of Christ, the Father of all mankind; I read a pledge of your devotion to the cause of truth, of the spirit in which you will strengthen the hands of your worthy minister in his important and arduous work; and of your readiness to adopt all wise and practicable means to spread Unitarianism in your neighbourhood and country. God's blessing on you and him. And while the very fact of opening this place of worship will, it is to be hoped, do much to encourage the timid, and fix the wavering; while it will leave without excuse those who avow not, nor act upon their opinions; and probably stimulate many to inquire concerning the sect so spoken against; let me hope that it will also promote the discharge of that other and most important duty which truth imposes, of

III. Conformity with its dictates. Without this, all else is but as "sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." Here may love to God, and love to man, be inspired, invigorated, and extended. Pre-eminently favourable are your principles to benevolence, and closer than any other do they draw the bonds of universal brotherhood. Their influence in the production of this, the essence of all social virtue, I

shall enlarge upon in the evening, and will only remark now, that not less favourable are they to devotion. To know God is to love him; and as all mistake about a perfect being must necessarily make him appear less amiable than he really is, the removal of such errors, and the dispersion of this confusion, tend immediately and powerfully to elevate devotion. Distraction and depression are the natural results of the notions of a plurality of divine persons, and of the vindictiveness of divine justice. They hide the truth, and, of course, obstruct and weaken, if not destroy, the feelings of pious gratitude which would spring up in its light. Above, heaven bends in benignant loveliness; and below, earth smiles in grateful and responsive fruitfulness, like God and the heart of man; but the interposing cloud that veils the glories of the one casts a broader and deeper circle of gloom upon the other. From you that cloud has passed away. Soon may it in all regions, that to Him whose right they are, the prayers, and thanksgivings, and hearts of his children may be restored. The services for which this building is destined are not those of vain forms, or slavish feelings, or sectarian narrowness. It is the worship of the Father, "in spirit and in truth," that we would cultivate; not only here, but in our bosoms, our homes, our lives. We revere him in all the spirituality of his nature, the immensity of his presence, the paternity of his character. The uni-

verse is his temple; the dome of heaven its lofty roof; the plain of earth its wide basis; sun, moon, and stars its glittering ornaments; every contrite heart an altar, every upright man a priest; and obedience and sincerity the incense that shall ascend to his palace and his throne, and draw down his gracious benediction.

EVENING SERMON.

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1 JOHN iv. 11:

"BELOVED, IF GOD SO LOVED US, WE OUGHT ALSO TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER."

IN the Sermon delivered to you this morning, I was led by the occasion to discourse principally on that important topic, the Object of divine worship, concerning which we hold opinions that separate us from those whom we love as fellow-christians, and whom, were they not our fellow-christians, we should still love as our fellow-men. I should not, however, do justice to the cause of Unitarianism, were the impression to be left that it is a system which tends more to divide than to unite, to alienate than to identify. The pleasanter task is now before me, of endeavouring to illustrate the benevolence of its spirit, and the influence of its representations of the Divine character, by the adoption (which is made with peculiar propriety on our principles) of the language of John, the beloved disciple, the apostle of charity.

The text is an argument from piety to benevolence, or rather from the character of the Object of worship to what ought to be that of his worshipers; from God's love of man to men's love of each other;

and this is an argument interesting in itself, as well as adapted to excite our respect for the reasoner. It is conclusive in its nature, and noble in its very conception. It is a specimen of a good man's mode of thinking; it is the sound ratiocination of a charitable heart. I take it in the largest application, as belonging to the human race, although not disposed to deny that he might have Christians peculiarly in view. There is nothing in the love of Christians opposed to the love of man; nay, it was one step by which the mind was led and trained to the ascent of those heights of benevolence which command the widest horizon of kindly feeling, paternal affection, and common hopes. When the Jew learned to love his Christian brother, of whatever country, he had subdued a powerful prejudice, and annihilated the most formidable barrier which then existed to the expansion of the affections. The mission of Christ was the particular instance of the love of God on which John reasoned; but although that was only rightly estimated, and its immediate blessings only felt by Christians, yet as it indicated love to all his rational creatures, and will ultimately extend its mercies to all, the argument holds in the largest application. The lesson had been taught before, in the parable of the good Samaritan, that man is our neighbour, whatever his country or religion; and the great rule of social life, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," rests on the assumption of universal brotherhood. The love of Christians is,

indeed, included, as general benevolence is made up of particular regards to each, according to their merit, or their wants, or their relation to us as parts of the great whole. An impossible character was drawn of the enthusiast of whom it was said, that "he loved his kind, but hated his kin." The converse may be true. Selfishness may be extended, as it were, so as to embrace and identify with ourselves, our family, or party, or country even, and yet no generous love for man warm the bosom; but where that plant exists, these leaves and blossoms will burst forth upon its stem, and give it symmetry and beauty. The benevolent principle implies the selfish, in the best sense of that word, in the only sense in which selfishness is allowable to the Christian.

The Apostle asserts a fact, that *God loved us;* enjoins a duty, that *we ought to love one another;* and argues a connexion between the fact and the duty, a motive or tendency in the one to enforce the obligation and promote the practice of the other, which it is our object to illustrate.

God loves men, or why did he make them? Who sets about producing that which he designs shall become hateful to himself? We should think the man mad who should busy himself in projecting and creating nuisances around him, only that he might afterwards destroy them, or suffer them to exist as long as himself, that he might be ever covering them with marks of his contempt and in-

dignation. Such a design is altogether unimaginable. It is true that men's productions may often be annoyances to themselves, but this is never their plan; it is the defect of their plan; it is the consequence of impotence or ignorance. They want ability to realize their own conceptions, or foresight to anticipate all the results of their contrivance. Neither can be ascribed to the Author of our being. Our existence, therefore, proves his love to us. We *are*, therefore he loves us; for had he not, we should not be, we should never have been.

Indifference to his creatures cannot be supposed, for it is inconsistent with the notion of a Creator. Indifference is inert; it moves not, it impels not, it accounts for nothing, but that nothing is done, and is incompatible with the fact that God has created man, and does preserve him. Nor can we ascribe hatred to God. Beings who are capable of hatred, do not produce objects on which to gratify that passion. Hatred is connected with fear and feebleness. We cannot imagine it separate from injury received or apprehended. He who hates, could he have foreseen, and had he been able, would have made the object of his hatred a different being, or would have decreed his non-existence, or would effect his change. So long as we attribute such ability and foresight to God, must we hold him incapable, naturally and essentially incapable, of hatred.

He is omnipotent; his creatures can never become too strong for him; never less dependent on him

than at the moment of receiving being. Therefore the objects of his original love can never become the objects of his hatred. His love is eternal.

This reasoning applies alike to all; therefore all are, and alike, the objects of his love. It is impartial and universal. I know this position may startle some who have been educated in a very different theory of the Divine attributes. They will see a host of objections. They will demand, What, does God love alike the poor abandoned savage of the wilderness, and the citizen of refined and enlightened communities; the slaves of idolatry, and those made free with the liberty of the sons of God; Judea which he blessed with wine and oil, and Egypt which he desolated by his plagues; the cities of the plain on which he rained down fire and brimstone, and righteous Lot whom he preserved, and faithful Abraham with whom he established his covenant; the good to whom he gives cheering promises, and the wicked on whom he denounces awful threatenings; the inhabitants of heaven singing in his smile, and the prisoners of judgment groaning beneath his rod? I reply, yes, he did and does love them all, and alike; and such is the dictate both of reason and scripture, though the one uses, as the other authorizes, such terms as wrath, anger, hatred, vengeance, in reference to those of his dispensations which inflict pain, because such infliction is, in men, the mark of those dispositions, and it was needful gradually to purify the conceptions of creatures who

began with thinking the Deity such an one as themselves. In this sense we therefore say with Paul, that "God taketh vengeance," not forgetting his addition, "I speak as a man."

What is the real difficulty in these cases? God afflicts, and therefore he hates, is most clearly not a general truth; for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." In some cases, at least, therefore, it is a mark of affection. But those were the good, believers, Christians. Well, there are cases in which all must allow affliction to be a mercy, a blessing, a proof of love to the wicked; for how often is it the means of making them good, believers, Christians! No means of reformation is more common. And hence, to the admission that the afflictions of the righteous are always in mercy, must be added, that to some of the wicked, afflictions are also a demonstration that God loves them. But does God love those who die in their iniquity, and rise to judgment and condemnation? I grant not, if their suffering be eternal, or end in annihilation; but if they be purified by it, then he does. That they will, I infer from the argument already advanced, to which these objections may present difficulties, but no part of which they touch as argument. That inference Scripture confirms, by declaring his love and paternity;* treating the resurrection as an universal blessing;† assuring us of the will and power of God

* Psalm ciii. 9, 13, 14, cxlv. 9; Eph. iv. 6; 1 John iv. 8.
† Rom. v. 12—21; 1 Cor. xv. 22.

to save all;* promising an universal subjection to Christ,† and by announcing the fact that the whole creation shall be made free with the liberty of the sons of God.‡ Still it may be urged, this shews his loving all, but not alike, as there is the immense difference of salvation after the few short years of an earthly probation, and after ages of penal suffering. But is not the notion of compensation employed in all religions, all interpretations of Christianity; nay, is it not necessary to natural religion? Is not one great argument for a future state derived from the inequality of enjoyment here, the sufferings of the good, and the pledge implied in the Divine character that for those sufferings the good man shall have compensation? However long the wicked may suffer, if he be purified and restored, in eternity a point must come when his enjoyments shall, even to his own mind, balance and over-balance his past endurance; when, even if he had been innocent, there would be no impeachment of justice, as the evil has become much lighter than the good in his existence; and when as to indications of the love of God, he is precisely in the same state as if from that moment his being commenced, and were always and eternally a happy being. To this may all be reduced; to the same thing as lives equally blessed, but commencing at different periods. If that be a

* Ezek. xxxiii. 11; 2 Peter iii. 9; Dan. iv. 35.

† Eph. i. 8—10; Col. i. 19, 20; John xii. 32; 1 John ii. 2.

‡ Rom. viii. 19—21; 1 Cor. xv. 23—28.

difficulty, it is a final one; but it is surely no great difficulty. With eternity before us, it matters little at what exact point we start on the endless career. To me, it is none; nor at all detracts from the strictly impartial love of God to all.

That love takes various forms, according to the diversified position of its objects. To man, as such, it is the gift of existence, with his various senses and capacities. As the tenant of this globe, it appears in all the convenience and garniture of his grand and spacious and lovely habitation, which seems rather a palace for the sons of God, than a court for trial, or the dungeon of punishment, which some depict it. As a social being, it environs him with the blissful and holy ties of parent, child, family, and country, and fastens a thousand gentle links upon his heart. It provides for those communications by which the discoveries of genius, the labours of diligence, and the lives of others, become common property for delight and improvement. As a religious being, it affords sources of knowledge about God, and impulses to devotion, and the dictates of reason, and the teachings of providence, and the word of God, and the mission of Christ, and the assurance of immortality. As repentant, it takes the shape of spontaneous and free and generous mercy, blotting out the condemning record, and promising pardon and peace. As obedient, it encourages, supports, consoles, and animates, and leads through changes and trials to glory. In heaven it makes every power and circum-

stance and associate an agent for bliss. In hell it conducts the awful, but resistless, moral machinery by which obduracy is softened, and pollution purified. And in the promised consummation of all things it blazes forth, making the universe one mighty tablet on which to inscribe *God is love*, in characters too resplendent to be steadily contemplated, and before which rational existence must bow in that mute and prostrate adoration which is all that remains to bespeak the overpowering boundlessness of his love, and the admiration, rapture, and intensity of our feelings.

Such is the apostle's fact. By this he enforces on us the duty of loving each other; that is, of rendering to all the peculiar services for which their station gives peculiar claims;—reverence to parents, fidelity to friends, kindness to those who need, pity to the bad, esteem for the good, forgetfulness of injuries, and the recompence of good for evil, and a lively interest in all that relates to the great family of man, shewing itself in benevolent activity, according to our powers and circumstances. We proceed to notice some of the various ways in which the fact bears upon the duty, and either makes it imperative on the conscience, or renders it easy in the performance.

1. *It is generally true that the mere exhibition of excellence disposes the observer to imitation.* The chief exceptions to this maxim are when the excellence, though existing and sufficiently evident to an impartial or competent judge, is yet not per-

ceived or appreciated; or when there is a consciousness of incapability so discouraging as to paralyze; or a pride so great as only to be content with an impossible rivality; or such a devotion to other pursuits as to deter from the attempt. Some analogy with these exceptions unhappily holds in religion; as though moral good should be man's great object, he often forsakes the fountain of life to hew out broken cisterns, and busies himself about any thing but that which is the proper business of an heir of immortality. And there are, too, those whose thoughts rarely rise to the contemplation of the best of beings, who look at his glory but through their own darkened fancies, seeing little to love or admire, and who, therefore, are comparatively unaffected by that which though, at best, we behold but as in a glass, should and might "change us into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

Benevolence of the purest and highest order, that active good-will which is in the largest sense disinterested, can only be diffused in one way, by its practical exhibition. It admits not of the application of hopes and fears, rewards and punishments. And in this way it is presented, and a kindred feeling excited. The best artists have been sometimes formed by the admiring contemplation of former works of art. The flash of intellect has kindled congenial fires. The record of eminent philanthropists has created similar enthusiasm. And when we regard the providence and plans of God, his works of nature and of

grace, his sun shining on the good and the evil, his tender mercies over all, his patience, forbearance, and long-suffering, his kindness to the unthankful, his rich forgiveness and anticipatory welcome of the returning prodigal, the flowers with which he has strewn our path, and the hopes that beam along our course, the encouragements of obedience and consolations of affliction, the heaven of the righteous, and the benignant provision for chastising offenders; when gathering from his ways what he is in himself, we adopt the glorious language of scripture, that *he is the Father, he is love,* we surely cannot remain wrapped in self, or think only of what he has done for *us* peculiarly, or admire his boundless benignity without a corresponding overflow of love, like his, to our fellows. How can we see him as he is, and not be like him?

2. *The imitation of God is a Christian duty.* "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love." "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." And how? "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you, that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." We cannot imitate God without loving and doing good to man. The oppressor does not imitate him; righteousness and mercy are the pillars of his throne. The persecutor does not imitate him; He strikes not the heretic or the unbeliever. The conqueror does not imitate God;

He wages no war even on his enemies by wicked works, or the souls would perish before him which he has made. The selfish man does not imitate him; He forms worlds for his creatures' habitation, not his own, and their good is his glory. It was in going about doing good continually, with super-human powers, that Christ was the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. The obligation to imitate him is one link between his and our love to man.

3. *The condition on which he blesses each, is solicitude for the well-being of the whole.* The very title of our possession is a readiness to distribute. "Freely ye have received, freely give," is the charter of our privileges. The more he has evidently loved us, the more his love has been shewn in his bounties, just so much the more are we bound to exert ourselves in relieving the wants, dispelling the ignorance, and promoting the happiness of others. The man who lives only for himself is an usurper and a robber; he takes advantage of a trust which he does not execute, and grasps a bestowment of which he discharges not the conditions. "God giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not," but he requires of them to give to each other. We are pensioners on his bounty, and this is the tenure of our pension. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" Not talent, not wealth, not the advantages of science, not the benefits of society, not the blessings of the gospel, not the hope of immortality. "Thou camest naked

into the world," and with these has mercy endowed thee, that thou mightest do good in the world. If the gifts be large, large also is the return commanded of benevolence to others.

4. *The usual expression of divine love is the relation of Parent to us, and to all, which implies our fraternal relation to one another.* "Have we not all one Father?" and are we not then brethren? Formed of one blood, wherever dwelling on the face of the earth, his condescending beneficence constitutes us one family, in spite of every diversity. It is not the worshiping by other forms, believing in a different creed, or even having, in imagination, another God: it is not the strange sounds of other tongues, or forms of other garbs: it is not the hereditary hostility which selfish policy fosters, and ambition makes men tools by, for its destructive purposes: it is not diversity of colour or of climate: it is not any or all the varieties which nature, or art, or time, have made in man, that should have power to break this holy bond. Our brotherhood can have no just limits but those of the Divine Paternity; and where are those limits? Not in the mountains or the ocean; not in parallels of latitude or longitude; not in the east or the west; not in Judea or in Christendom; not in faith or unbelief; not in Unitarianism or idolatry; they are not in mind or body, time or place, so long as aught human is different or beyond. On whomsoever his sun shines should

the light of our love beam, and wherever, on human dwellings, his rain descends, should the dews of our affection fall. All that discriminates is less than that which unites. Nature around us, and within us, is common; the air, and earth, and sun, and sky; senses, mind, and heart; and his love, the source and sum of all. When shall this union triumph over the pride, folly, craft, selfishness, and ambition, that have made man the agent of so much misery to man?

5. *The object of his love in the gospel* (alluded to by *John) is to excite, enlarge, and strengthen this mutual affection.* We enter not into the design of Christianity unless we strive for its advancement. We know not what spirit we are of, unless this inspire us. Our faith is dead if it work not by love. We may be very correct as to religious doctrines, and scrupulous as to forms, and punctual as to services; but if this be absent, in the Christian estimate we are nothing. Christianity harmoniously combines with "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men." If the love of God be "shed abroad in our hearts," love to man will spring up out of them. Such were its first-fruits, and such must be its harvest. In infancy it threw down the barrier that separated Jew and Gentile; it fed from the same table, and supported on the common stock those who for ages had had no dealings with each other; it mastered avarice, and

trampled on pride, and exiled prejudice, and subdued passion; and in the days of its reviving strength and glory, in the power of its resurrection from the grave of corruption, it shall be the fellowship of nations and the pacification of the world. Like the lightning it shall shine from one end of heaven to the other; but it will be to enlighten and not to blast. Like the sea it shall flow from shore to shore; but it will be to identify and not to divide. These are its aim. As these feelings are generated in its disciples, its work is done, and only then. This is the reign of Christ on earth.

6. *If God, the pure and infinite spirit, loves man, much more should we, brethren in infirmity and sin, love each other;* is another way in which the argument may be put. How must the delusive pleas of indifference vanish, when the benignity of heaven to all is thus contrasted! Man, why lovest thou not thy brother? Is it that he is inferior in station? Let him be the slave of slaves, and be thou the king of kings, how much nearer is thy rank, or nobility, or regality, to the throne of God? To thee the eternal majesty of heaven must bend as low in love as it does to him. Is he disgustingly ignorant? Poor sharer in the folly of the wise, learn that omniscience is not disgusted with him, or with thee. Is he vicious? I commend not complacency in his vice; but where is thine immaculate robe before him in whose sight the heavens are not clean? If

the sovereign of the universe, all wise and holy, love thee, worm of the dust as thou art with all thy boasting, it is surely no hard, no degrading task, in thee to love a fellow-man a few degrees below thee in thine own imagination. Thou hast with him common weaknesses, infirmities, errors, and transgressions; God has none nor can have. *He* cannot say, I have in common with this despised creature, a dependence on circumstances which lowers this man and raises that, and might have made me what he is and him what I am; the passions which have polluted him, or others as vile, rage in my bosom, and might, had temptation opportunely presented, stained me with a guilt to which his is light; and if I own not his offences yet am I conscious of others; I am like him the creature of sense and frailty, and too much a brother to be a judge. All this *He* cannot say of any creature, but the best man may and must say it of the worst, and yet he sees in that worst an object of the infinite, and impartial, and eternal love of God, and therefore of his own.

7. Whatever its infirmities or capacities, his love has endowed us with a common nature, deduced us from a common origin, and it designs for us ultimately a common destiny of joy. All these divided streams flowed from one fountain, and in one ocean shall their waters mingle. The very anticipation of our final union should be a present bond. The benevolent affections are our preparation for dwelling

together in our Father's mansion; they are a fitness for our future inheritance which all must gain before they enter on its possession. How blissful to look on man as the child of God, who, whatever his wanderings and his sufferings, shall be recovered to the right path! How does it shame every superciliious and angry and ungenerous feeling! How does it make the heart glow with philanthropy, and render the brightest hopes subservient to the warmest affections!

If this view of the apostle's argument be correct, if there be such a connexion between the love of God to man, and that of men to each other, then must those systems which give the largest notions of the love of God be most conducive to benevolence. Then must there be something pernicious, so far as their influence is felt and uncorrected, as to their social results, in all creeds which say, in effect, God does not love all, he will not save the non-elect, he will eternally torment, or annihilate even, the wicked. As far as such qualifications are admitted, the argument from his love is nullified, and its tendency is neutralized. If he so love us as yet to destroy some, why may not man's benevolence allow injury and destruction? It is not so delightful to the mind, it is not so expanding to the heart, to contemplate a Father in heaven making such tremendous differences, shewing such tremendous partialities to his common children on the earth. Away

with such calumnies; nor let their narrowing influence survive their theoretical existence. Think better of God, and act up to the purer and loftier conceptions of his benignity, which you derive both from reason and revelation. He is one. O that here, as they shall be hereafter, his rational offspring may be one in peace and piety and love. Amen.

THE END.

Printed by G. SMALLFIELD, *Hackney.*

THE SPIRIT OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT

THE OPENING OF THE

FINSBURY UNITARIAN CHAPEL,

ON

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1ST, 1824:

To which is prefixed,

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED

ON LAYING THE FIRST STONE OF THE CHAPEL,

ON

Thursday, May 22nd, 1823.

BY W. J. FOX.

London:

SOLD BY C. FOX AND CO., 33, THREADNEEDLE STREET; R. HUNTER, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND D. EATON, 187, HOLBORN.

1824.

G. SHARPLESS, Printer, Hadleigh.

FINSBURY UNITARIAN CHAPEL.

SACRED TO THE ONE GOD, THE FATHER.

THE Foundation Stone of this Unitarian Chapel, for the use of the Congregation previously assembling in Parliament Court, Artillery Lane, Bishopsgate Street, was laid on Thursday, May 22nd, 1823, by

W. J. FOX, *Minister.*

HENRY SANFORD, *Treasurer.*

ELHANAN BICKNELL,
JOHN TOWNEND,
ROBT. MATTHEW IMESON,
IVES HURRY,
WALTER A. PEACOCK,
JOHN CORDELL,

Committee.

RICHARD TITFORD,
THOMAS HORNBY,
EVAN EVANS,
THOMAS GOODWIN,
JOHN PAGE,
WILLIAM CROUCHER.

JOHN BURRELL,
Architect.

JOHN AND HENRY LEE,
Builders.

The foregoing Inscription, on Parchment, secured in the usual mode, was deposited beneath the foundation of the Chapel.

AN ADDRESS, &c.

"THERE IS ONE GOD, AND ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MEN, THE MAN CHRIST JESUS, WHO GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR ALL, TO BE TESTIFIED IN DUE TIME."

IN this faith, in the belief of this, the genuine Apostles' Creed, we commence the erection of a Christian Temple for the worship of the Universal Parent.

It well describes the great outline of our opinions, and strongly marks their peculiarities.

The sole object of our adoration is "the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by himself:" of whom Moses proclaimed to an assembled nation, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord:" of whom prophets announced that "his name should be one in all the earth:" to whom Christ prayed as "the only true God:" and of whom apostles declared, "To us there is but one God, the Father."

His is the supremacy, not only of power, but of wisdom and benevolence. He is light; he is love; he is the Father of all. "There is none good," in the noblest sense, "but one, that is God." "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." No malignant being contests with him the empire

of creation. No subordinate deity, no equal partner, intercepts the homage of our hearts in its passage to his throne, or claims, with us, the merit of moving him to mercy.

Jesus of Nazareth, the brother of the human race, was made by him both Lord and Christ, and sent to reconcile the world unto himself by dispelling men's ignorance, turning them from their iniquities, assuring them of immortality, and forewarning them of that awful day when God shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath appointed.

He ransomed us, by his exertions, sufferings, and resurrection, (not from our heavenly Father, for we need no deliverance from his hands; to be in them is our safety, joy, and hope,) but from the bondage of doubt, idolatry, and vice. And thus he ransomed all: for his religion, the truth of nature, confirmed, illustrated, and extended by Revelation, is pursuing its predicted course to universal empire here, and scripture testifies that, ultimately, the whole creation shall be made free with the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

May the building which we raise, be as a fortress for the defence of these simple, holy, and animating truths! Here, in their behalf, may we buckle on the whole armour of God, and go forth to the righteous conflict which we have to sustain! For ours is a state of warfare—of warfare with the *corruption* that makes religion the drudge of worldly policy;

with the *spiritual tyranny* that demands the prostration of the understanding at its feet, and would bind the freemen of Christ in the fetters of human creeds; with the *scepticism* that would quench the torch that alone can light us through the shades of death; with the *prejudice* that doubts whether any good thing can come out of the Nazareth of Unitarianism; with the *credulity* that, for the simple faith and worship of the gospel, receives a system at which "reason stands aghast, and faith herself is half confounded;" with the *bigotry* that, reversing the miracle proposed to Christ, transforms the bread of life itself into stones wherewith to wound or slay the brother who offends by diversity of opinion; and with the *superstition* which makes faith or ceremony, instead of holiness, the passport to future blessedness. With these we wage an everlasting conflict, and the prize of our victory is the emancipation of the human race.

I said *warfare*—it is with systems, not with persons. To the most mistaking man alive, we owe a brother's love; to his errors, nothing. We use no unhallowed arms. By argument and persuasion only would we prevail. The calumny, the anathema, the penalty, the dungeon, are weapons which we leave to others, and only leave, because we cannot wrest them from their grasp, to break and bury in oblivion.

May this building prove an asylum for the wretched!

Here may the ignorant, the poor, the friendless, seek the God of light and consolation, "whose tender mercies are over all his works," and whom they shall not seek in vain!

Here may the child of sorrow drink of the waters of life, and renew his strength, and behold bright glimpses of Almighty love beaming athwart the clouds that overshadow the path of his pilgrimage, and look through the mist of tears to the lovely regions of immortality!

Here may the wanderer, entangled in the wilderness of doubt and error, hail the day-spring on high of Christian truth, and regain the path of peace, and find rest unto his soul!

Here may the victim of fanaticism, the slave of terror, learn to think better of his God: and as he beholds the caprice and vengeance which he has ascribed to the Deity (to his own dismay and despair) fading before the mild glories of paternal love, may he receive, "not the spirit of bondage, again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"!

The members of the society in whose name I am speaking, have a still nearer personal interest in the future employment of the edifice now commenced. It will be to them a school of mutual improvement, of preparation for the nobler occupations of a celestial mansion.

To stimulate inquiry, diffuse information, and guide in the pursuit of truth; to cultivate that devotion,

simple yet fervent, and that morality, strict yet benevolent, by which Christianity is characterized; to strengthen its motives and brighten its hopes in their own bosoms; to train their youth in the way in which they should go, and make the hoary head a crown of glory, and build up one another in their most holy faith, on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone: these are the honourable, useful, all-important views which they have in this undertaking.

May the holy train of Christian graces,—*Sympathy* wiping away the tears of grief, *Patience* bowing meekly to the will of Heaven, *Devotion* holding high communion with the Omnipresent, *Gratitude* faithfully and deeply tracing the record of bounties, *Resignation* looking from the grave with tearful eye to heaven, *Integrity* moving along her narrow path with fixed eye and undeviating step, and *Charity* with glowing heart and liberal hand,—hither repair, and here make their permanent abode!

Hearers of Winchester, who yet survive, and in whose hearts and eyes the animation of youth rekindles when you remember how that apostle of benevolence came, proclaiming "God is love," and tracing that principle, with glowing eloquence, to its glorious results: Hearers of Vidler, to whom his clear and nervous reasoning first demonstrated the kindred truth that God is one, and who will long mournfully cherish the remembrance of his vigorous mind: you have seen, in the indication which this

event affords of the progress to maturity of the society whose infancy they cherished; and in the evidence which every day affords of the wide diffusion of their principles and ours, a sight which would have gladdened them, and in the enjoyment of which we are entering into their labours. This day be their memory blessed! You are about to follow them. All of us must soon pass away, and other generations shall succeed us here; but may the same spirit blend together all the successive generations that shall raise on this spot the voice of praise and supplication, animating them with the like ardour for truth and righteousness; uniting them in love and good works; surrounding them with a bright atmosphere of usefulness on earth; and preparing them, ultimately, to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father!

And O thou, Lord of heaven and earth, Father of the human race, who didst send thy son, Jesus Christ, to bless us and all mankind, grant that here men may long call on thy name, in spirit and in truth, to thy glory, and their salvation. Send forth thy light and thy truth unto all nations. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Amen.

A SERMON, &c.

SACRED be this building to the worship of the only God, the Father of Jesus Christ our Lord, his Father and our Father, his God and our God!

May his Almighty blessing attend the services which shall be conducted within these walls, rendering them effective for the promotion of an enlightened faith in Christianity, sincere and constant obedience to its precepts, and the full enjoyment of its consolations.

And may those, by whose exertions and primarily for whose accommodation this Chapel has been erected, behold, in their own moral improvement, and in the conversion of others to the genuine gospel, the work of the Lord prospering in their hands.

ROMANS viii. 9:

"NOW IF ANY MAN HAVE NOT THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, HE IS NONE OF HIS."

ON laying the first stone of this Chapel, to the completion of which a kind Providence has sustained us, I stated the leading principles of our religious system, which are three: 1st, the doctrine of the *Divine Unity*, that there is one being or person, the

Father, who alone is God, and to be adored; and whose dominion is sole, absolute, and universal: 2dly, that of the *Humanity of Christ*, that Jesus, the Messiah, the Messenger of the covenant, the author of our faith, the first-born from the dead, was of the human race, and like unto his brethren: and 3rdly, that of the *Final Restoration*, that the dispensation of grace with which his name is indissolubly connected, and which chiefly consists of the results of his teaching, sufferings, and resurrection, shall terminate in saving all that was lost, and bringing every rational creature to goodness and happiness; or, to repeat the summary in the appropriate and emphatic language of Paul, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." The first of these doctrines gives us the title of Unitarians, and there are some most worthily bearing that name who dissent from the other two: but they are generally held amongst us: they are only inferior to that in importance; and they are so intimately connected with it, and so influential, especially the last, upon our minor speculations, and our religious feelings, as fairly to entitle them to a place even in this brief confession. So combined, then, let them stand, as an honest and full reply to the stranger within our gates, who may properly demand what we are, and, why we separate from others? He will at once see that we *cannot* worship at altars raised to a plurality of divine per-

sons, nor regard in any other light than as gross corruptions of the gospel, the deification of Jesus of Nazareth, and the denunciation of endless vice and misery against a large portion, or any portion, of mankind: he will also perceive that our dissent is on scriptural principles, and our creed a scriptural and apostolic creed. This position might be further illustrated (were it needful to repeat what is already, at your request, before the public) by shewing how, of every doctrine which we hold, the assertion may be made, and of every doctrine which we deny, the contradiction offered, in the plain words of scripture.

This claim will not, I apprehend, be made, or if made, cannot be supported, by any other denomination of Christians. But there is another mode of viewing the difference between us and them, for which the present occasion is a proper and favourable opportunity. I mean not the diversity of doctrines between the Trinitarian and Unitarian systems, but of spirit, and the greater congeniality of the latter with that of the New Testament. All Christians found their faith upon the Scriptures, but not only do they assign various, and even opposite meanings to particular passages, they differ also as to the passages which they select as containing the primary truths of the gospel, and in harmony with which others, deemed less clear, must be expounded: in the frequency with which doctrines, believed alike by all, are advocated, and the degree of importance and prominence ascribed to such doctrines in their

system: and consequently, in the practical bearing and tendency of the whole. This diversity is promoted by the fact, that in the New Testament itself the doctrines of Christianity cannot be said to occupy a space in exact proportion to their intrinsic importance and permanent relation to each other; much of it being occupied with local and temporary controversies, which compelled the writers to insist more on particular topics, in the way of explanation and proof, than they would have done had their task been only to teach truth without reference to existing and opposing error. Every tenet, for instance, bearing on the right of Gentiles to equal religious privileges with the Jews, was, in consequence of the dispute on that subject, appealed to, asserted and re-asserted, and dwelt upon with a fulness and earnestness which, if continued after that controversy became defunct, would exhibit a very disproportionate picture of Christianity. For this, therefore, allowance should be made in our study of the New Testament. Allowance should also be made, in reviewing modern systems of theology, for the occasional prominence of subjects in controversy, beyond their natural rank of importance in the system to which they belong. This being done, we may fairly come to the question of which has most of the spirit of Christ or Christianity; and of systems, as of persons, may justly conclude, that where that is wanting, and in proportion as it is wanting, the system is none of his. Into that question I

shall only enter so far as to attempt a delineation of the spirit of original Christianity, and shew the affinity, or rather identity with it, of that of modern Unitarianism.

1. Christianity was eminently a system of *piety*, and produced the constant and universal recognition of a God in human affairs. Its votaries endured as seeing him who is invisible; in him they lived, and moved, and had their being; and they felt, as well as believed, that of him, and through him, and to him are all things. This shines conspicuous through all the diversity of their characters, circumstances, and histories. Whatever their path of life, they walked with God; and whether evil or good, they saw him in every thing, and every thing in him. Such is the natural result of Unitarian principles; they embrace whatever is most favourable to this habit of the mind, and they reject the tenets which tend to limit or enfeeble it. According to them, evil, natural and moral, is part of the Divine plan; and not an innovation on that plan, or its defeat. We are not driven to account for its introduction by the agency of a malignant spirit, whose becoming so remains as much a mystery as that which he is introduced to solve, and only removes the difficulty a single step; who is its author and preserver, and commenced his hostility to the Deity so mightily that he, as many devoutly sing, "in one hour spoiled six days' labour of a God"; who has achieved and exercises an undefined but vast dominion in the

worlds of matter and of mind; and who, in that final defeat which is anticipated, will yet drag myriads down with him to his own flaming pit, and "point at them for his" through all eternity. Where others see *his* works, we see the works of God. In our view, there is not an evil as well as a good deity, and an evil as well as a good providence, struggling in fearful conflict, not indeed of equal strength, but the feebler amply sufficient for the destruction of millions of our race: we acknowledge but one God, and one providence, and both benignant. To these we ascribe all beings and all events, and the God in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, we desire at all times, to glorify. Nor is ours the confused and divided piety which renders supreme homage to three coequal persons. The first promulgators of our religion had evidently, in their devout effusions, reference to but one presiding mind. They mention subordinate benefactors as well as the supreme, but there was only one Supreme to whom they ascribed primarily every good gift. If of a supposed plurality of divine persons, the character, actions, and designs are precisely the same, and they always proceed conjointly, there is still the evil of perplexity in worship, and of offering in equal portions to several of those emotions, which are, undivided, a far nobler sacrifice to One; and if they be varied, as is the case in some measure in the Trinitarian scheme, there is the greater evil of regarding them with different feelings, of rendering to each an

imperfect homage, which might be increased did its object possess the qualities or pursue the course of the others, and thus, in fact, the danger of having no object of supreme and unbounded devotion at all. The union of qualities which they distribute; the concentration of emotions which they scatter; and the adoration in one divine person of all which they ascribe to three, is the work of Unitarianism, and the result a closer approach to that Christian piety which loves the Lord our God with all the heart and soul, the mind and strength.

Faith was the great excellence, the vital principle, of the characters which sacred history has preserved for our imitation. That they lived in faith, made their lives admirable; and that they died in faith, was the blessedness of their memories. Strong are the praises bestowed by the sacred writers on this quality, noble the virtues which they ascribe to its influence, and manifold the blessings which they promise to its exercise: O the abuse of words, the tricks put on men's minds by varying the meaning of terms, or keeping out of sight the variations of their meaning, and the incalculable mischief which has resulted from this perversion!

The primary meaning of faith, in the Scriptures, is what we call fidelity or faithfulness; from which it easily came to signify that confidence or trust which is generated by assurance of the fidelity of another, from whom we have received the promise

of any particular good, and which, where there has been no specific promise, may yet arise from a conviction of benignity of character, kindness of purpose, and power of execution, in its object. By a further change, on a very obvious principle, it would be applied to credence in the declarations of its object, to the declarations themselves, and to the results of their reception. These applications, and one or two others of a similar description, undoubtedly occur in the later and more controversial of the works which constitute the Bible; but they were only applications; and confidence in a faithful or a benignant God is the distinctive faith of Revealed Religion.

If the Scriptures indeed spoke of faith in the sense which is now so prevalent; if they described by it a string of propositions, or that credence in such propositions which is an involuntary and merely intellectual act; and at the same time treated it as voluntary, ranked it above all moral qualities, and annexed heaven to its exercise, and endless hell to its absence; then would a more formidable objection be made out against Christianity than sceptic has ever devised; and a more fatal accusation be substantiated against its influence than enemy has ever advanced. That Christians have (if not asserting it in terms) yet practically adopted and acted on the assumption that the mere belief of propositions is a voluntary

trampled on pride, and exiled prejudice, and subdued passion; and in the days of its reviving strength and glory, in the power of its resurrection from the grave of corruption, it shall be the fellowship of nations and the pacification of the world. Like the lightning it shall shine from one end of heaven to the other; but it will be to enlighten and not to blast. Like the sea it shall flow from shore to shore; but it will be to identify and not to divide. These are its aim. As these feelings are generated in its disciples, its work is done, and only then. This is the reign of Christ on earth.

6. *If God, the pure and infinite spirit, loves man, much more should we, brethren in infirmity and sin, love each other;* is another way in which the argument may be put. How must the delusive pleas of indifference vanish, when the benignity of heaven to all is thus contrasted! Man, why lovest thou not thy brother? Is it that he is inferior in station? Let him be the slave of slaves, and be thou the king of kings, how much nearer is thy rank, or nobility, or regality, to the throne of God? To thee the eternal majesty of heaven must bend as low in love as it does to him. Is he disgustingly ignorant? Poor sharer in the folly of the wise, learn that omniscience is not disgusted with him, or with thee. Is he vicious? I commend not complacency in his vice; but where is thine immaculate robe before him in whose sight the heavens are not clean? If

come abundant compensation: but, though he eternally torment me, or any, "yet will I trust in him," is a sentiment from which my heart recoils: and, if I greatly err not, most recoils when most under the influence of Christian feeling. If there be a doctrine which is deadly to faith, in the scriptural sense, that is the doctrine. If there be a system formed to produce faith (in that sense) in the highest degree, and to the widest extent, Unitarianism (as inclusive of final restoration) is that system.

Were this notion of faith kept in mind, we should hear no more of that presumed discrepancy between faith and reason, about which so much has been said both by believers and unbelievers. It destroys the possibility of their clashing, or coming into contact. It shews how both may be exercised to the greatest extent, in the most perfect harmony.

What confused language have theologians held about their distinct provinces, and where the one is bounded by the other! How variously have they fixed the barrier at which the exercise of reason is to end, and that of faith to begin! Some say the former is properly employed in estimating the evidences of the books of Scripture, but their genuineness being ascertained, must receive implicitly every sentence of their contents. Others allow a little more latitude, and permit its agency to determine the meaning of what must be believed. A further step is taken by Paley, and those who think with

him, that where the sacred writers have argued any point, reason may decide upon, and even reject their arguments, but when this is done must still receive their conclusions unquestioned, by whatever means arrived at. Now all these positions are pressed by the same difficulty. If reason judge of the genuineness of an epistle or gospel, why not of its contents? If of the meaning of a sentence, why not of its truth? If of the validity of an argument, why not of the justice of the conclusion? All go on the notion of something in faith to limit reason: a notion incompatible with the scripture doctrine of faith, nor defensible if that term be taken as descriptive of revelation itself, or of its belief.

It is conceded, nay, rather, it is matter of accusation against Unitarianism, that it extends the province of reason beyond where other systems have placed its bounds. They spare us proof, and make a charge of that which else we might well labour to establish as an honourable distinction. They do not, in this instance, misrepresent us so much as they misrepresent Christianity. Revelation is not an apparatus for limiting reason. Its design, and tendency, and result, were to call reason into exercise, enlarge its sphere, and invigorate its powers. What does the Bible contain that is supernatural? Facts. The call of Abraham, the deliverance and organization of Israel, the resurrection of Christ, &c. Facts, from which reason makes the deductions that

constitute religious truth; It taught truth originally, and should teach it now, by the agency of reason. It gives abstract propositions for implicit belief, no where. It has nothing analogous to the creeds of modern times and churches. How were the Jews taught the omnipotence of Jehovah? By the fact that neither the armies, nor the gods of Egypt or Canaan, could prevent their emancipation and settlement. How were they taught his omnipresence? By finding, as in the case of Jonah, that wherever they fled, they escaped not from that presence. Providence ordained the events, and prepared the pupils, so that their reason, operating on those events, arrived at the great truths which we call doctrines of revelation; which as men would not have known without Divine interposition, so neither could they have known without the exercise of reason. Revelation was the nurse of reason. What ordinary events are to natural religion, extraordinary events are to Christianity: they are only different volumes for reason to study in, and from which it rises with the important acquisition of religious truth. Hence the argumentative character of the Scriptures: which on other hypotheses is totally inexplicable. Here Unitarianism is in unison with the Bible, and in contrast with other systems, which setting out with an unwarrantable restriction, have proceeded to create others by elevating the authority of interpretations or of priests, till reason has only been

exhibited, crippled, and fettered, and dragged along after the triumphal chariot of a creed.

Christianity was a system of *liberty and liberality*; it was so as distinguished from Judaism, and Judaism was so as distinguished from at least the established forms of Christianity in modern times. No country has ever enjoyed more religious liberty than Judea. Under its theocratical government certain religious offences took, of necessity, the character of political crimes, and were visited with punishment. Even in this we shall see no violence to conscience if we consider the general mode of thinking in those times; for the idolater, believing that each country had its tutelary god, could not deny that Jehovah was the Lord of Israel, and entitled to reverence and submission within its confines. In all else, theoretically and practically, the widest latitude of opinion was allowed, and that without any draw-back of even the most trifling civil rights. They had no established creed, no test acts, no laws against opinions. Pharisees and Sadducees, the extreme sects of a later period of their history, and than which Europe scarcely presents wider extremes, mingled indiscriminately in the Sanhedrim, and arrived alternately at the High Priesthood. Christianity came not to abridge this freedom. It neither abrogated the obligation, nor disproved the justice, nor changed the policy of this principle of government. Its apostles went not to priests or rulers to deposit in their hands a direction

or permission from heaven for forging and imposing a yoke which neither themselves nor their fathers had ever borne. Its founder did not proclaim that he came to bind those who were free, and to preach a year of jubilee, not for slaves but tyrants, when instead of universal emancipation, there should be an universal return to vassalage. Its converts were invited to own no master but Christ, and him only on personal conviction of his authority from God. This made them Christians, and gave them all Christian privileges and equal rights. They were then free men of Christ, whose disposition was to "give place by subjection, no, not for an hour," to imposers of either faith or ceremony. For admission to their churches, for the hope of admission to heaven itself, this was their law, that "if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" while for those without, its language was, that "the Son of Man was not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them;" that those "who had not the law were a law unto themselves," and that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him."

Such was the spirit of Christianity. Of what systems is it the spirit now? Of those, which pile together multifarious and mysterious creeds, and call them the essentials of Christianity—which by incorporating these creeds in their religious services, do

all that in them lies to exclude those who adhere to Christian simplicity from the public worship of their common God—which with almost Pagan inconsistency prohibit any one's commemorating with them the death of Christ unless he believe the eternal deity of Christ—which deny not only Christian fellowship, but the Christian name to those who have every scriptural claim to its best privileges, and who have both defended the gospel by their writings, and adorned it by their lives, because they receive not their mysteries—which denounce endless punishment not only against those who may fear God and work righteousness without Christianity, but against those who fear God and work righteousness by the very power of faith in Christ, provided it be not their sort of faith, or their notion of Christ—which reckon for nothing the New-Testament confession of his authority, unless it be followed by the submission of reason or practice to *their* authority—which eagerly grasp at political influence and national wealth, and become the ready machinery of oppression, and raise distinctions, and pronounce exclusions in societies where all have equal rights, and crush the civil liberties of others even if it be by the sale or sacrifice of their own, and change the safeguards of property and freedom into the mere fortresses of a peculiar faith, and make those who differ pay the refuters of their own opinions, and the monopolizers of their own inheritance, and if

they have abandoned the illustration of the stable, still employ the dark demonstration of the dungeon? Whose image and superscription is this? Cæsar's it may be; for it is not of Christ. Pagan theology and worldly ambition have too much leavened modern Christianity: but not the whole mass. However other systems may divide among themselves these evils, in them Unitarian Christianity has no portion. Our faith and worship are simple, and not exclusive: we love goodness wherever found, and think that it is loved, and will be rewarded, by the Judge. The apostolic test of Christianity is ours: and perish our defence, perish our hopes of success, should one or the other ever involve any infringement of the rights of conscience, or of any other rights, or any violation of the dictates of Christian liberty and liberality!

The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of *holiness*. All the power of its doctrines, prophecies, miracles, precepts, and promises, is directed to the promotion of morality. The Saviour sacrificed himself to redeem us from all iniquity. Unitarianism adopts, without reservation, modification, or addition, the New-Testament accounts of the day of judgment, which uniformly represent men's moral character as deciding their destiny. It holds forth no immunity to that faith in a vicarious satisfaction, which most other systems make the only availing plea in that awful day. It allows none of those excuses for sin

which arise from a supposed total depravity of nature. It forbids any waiting for supernatural influences to enable men to do their duty. It has no royal road of instantaneous regeneration, from the death-bed of iniquity to the gates of Paradise. I believe there is not, nor ever has been, any religion that so frequently, so decidedly, so powerfully, as Unitarian Christianity, holds up the connexion of happiness with virtue, and of misery with vice, unweakened by any modification about belief or ceremony, and standing alone in broad characters, in all the supremacy of paramount importance.

Philanthropy may be regarded as having dawned upon the world in the instructions of Jesus of Nazareth. He made a common principle of what before was only an occasional sentiment. He bound men to each other's hearts, in spite of national and religious diversities, by a common origin, a common nature, and a common relation to the one God, their Almighty Father. That Father he imitated by feeling and inculcating universal love to man. One of these principles has become a distinguishing tenet of Unitarianism, to which other systems have abandoned the (to us) welcome task of proclaiming that God is, in the same sense, the Father of all, and consequently of putting in the strongest light the brotherhood of the human race. By whatever doctrine or hypothesis they limit or abrogate this principle; by his supposed hatred to a portion of his

rational creatures; by his eternal decree predestinating some to endless life, but others to endless misery; by his identifying the children of Adam with their transgressing parent, and therefore involving them (except the elect) in his wrath and curse; by his leaving some to the unaided workings of a nature supposed to be totally depraved, and only capable of producing guilt and wretchedness; by his not including them in the benefits of Christ's satisfaction, or of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit; by his seeing in them only fit subjects for the eternal visitations of his justice, and the display of his glory in their final ruin:—whatever modification be adopted, there cannot but result in the heart of man (unless he be driven to abhor, while he believes in, such a character of the Deity) a diminution of brotherly feeling towards some of the human race. But on whatever altar, and to whatever theological idol, bigotry would immolate this glorious truth, it is Unitarianism that rushes in between the priest and the victim, and stays the sacrifice, and saves from pollution the temple of Christianity. We approach not the throne of grace in the mockery of prayers for the salvation of all, which we know cannot and shall not be answered to all eternity: we see not, in the wide world, a claimant on our sympathy and love who, as our faith tells us, is unpitied and unloved of our God: we behold not in human nature a loathsome mass of corruption

which makes every thought a sin, and all, except our elect associates in the possession of supernaturally-bestowed holiness, not fit to be loved, and scarcely fit to live: we look not for a heaven for ever exclusive; nor think to hear with delight, or with content, the honours of vindictive justice proclaimed in groans of hopeless anguish; nor expect that, as they burst from the hearts of the objects of our fondest attachment here, or of any fellow-creature, they will minister to the perfection of our happiness, or be consistent with its existence. And therefore we can love mankind with an unreservedness and fulness of emotion, like that which glows in the New Testament; whose production by our system proclaims, that if the tree is judged by its fruit, Unitarianism is at least a scion of Christianity; and whose existence, whenever the happy inconsistency presents itself, in connexion with the theology we have adverted to, has the incongruous appearance of gathering grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles.

Judaism and Christianity were emphatically religions of *hope*. Their believers were always looking forward to something joyous in futurity: and their predictions had generally an expansive character, which refers their fulfilment not so much to a single event as a series of events, of similar nature, each surpassing in splendour and gladness that which preceded it, till the oracle is fully accomplished in

its most literal, which is also its most comprehensive, meaning. Their incipient, and then their crescent realization, give strength to faith, and that active energy which is so important to goodness, and scatter around multiplied consolations, and feed that eternal hope which it is so much blessedness to feel. The promise to Abraham, "that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed," is an illustrious instance of this kind. It had its first and lowest fulfilment when his posterity became a numerous, well-regulated, and comparatively enlightened nation in the midst of barbarous tribes. It had a yet better accomplishment when by their means, in captivity or commerce, a pure theism was widely diffused over the great empires of the east. In a larger sense was it realized in the mission of Christ, the descendant of Abraham, to proclaim glad tidings of great joy to all people. This illustration grew brighter in the rapid promulgation of his gospel, which went forth from Zion to many a nation, making Greek and Jew, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, one in Christ Jesus. A nobler commentary is, we trust, preparing in the extension of Christianity, till it become the universal religion, and lead on the latter days of freedom and knowledge, peace and improvement: nor shall we have nothing more left to expect from it, taken either in the strictness of the letter, or the benignant universality of its spirit, till we arrive at that felicitous consummation, of which all the rest

are shadows, when every family shall be blessed, because every individual shall be blessed, and "God shall be all in all." Like the ladder which Jacob saw, its foot is on earth, but it reaches to heaven; every step gladdens the eye by an enlargement of the prospect; we ascend to higher blessings, and trace them as they flow over a wider space; till we rest in the presence of God, and behold the universe basking in his smile.

Many other predictive passages might be alleged, some pointing to the same final result, others stopping short of that, but all of similar tendency, affording constant nourishment to that brightening and boundless hope which the chosen messengers of God so strongly felt, and the excitement of which seems characteristic of Divine Revelation.

Unitarianism sustains this heavenly ministry. That which characterized Christianity among the superstitions of antiquity, characterizes her among the interpretations of Christianity. When others raise the song of hope, her voice is ever heard in unison; and when they suffer that strain to die away, or bring it to a dolorous close amid yells of agony, and moanings of despair, she perseveres alone—alone but for a while; for her animating chaunt is the prelude to that swelling chorus when every creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, even all that are in them, shall ascribe blessing and honour and glory and power to Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb for ever.

Delineation, rather than argument, has been my object. I wished to shew what Unitarianism is, more completely than by a bare statement of our opinions; to make obvious, not merely its outward form and pressure, but its vital spirit; to shew it as it exists, not only in the Scriptures which we read, but in us when we are reading them; not only in our heads, but in our hearts; not only in our controversial, but in our devout moments; not only in our books, but in our lives. We thus give the inquirer as to what we wish him to think, the additional and more important information of what we wish him to be. With our principles is combined a view of the dispositions they cherish, and the character they form; whose worth is a practical test, immediately of their excellence, and remotely of their truth.

Yes, a test indirectly of their truth—for we are reasoning on the assumption of the truth of Christianity; and if our doctrines generate the spirit of Christ, there is no slight presumption that they are his doctrines. The identity of the result is an argument for the identity of the means; an argument forcible in itself, but conclusive when, as in this case, there is independent evidence of the Christian character of those means, and of their prominence in the Christian system. That there is one God, and God is love, is not more an Unitarian than a scriptural conviction; nor more in harmony with the spirit of the interpretation than with that of the

text. We are strong in the plain and literal declarations of the New Testament; but we are yet stronger in the sameness of the *general impression* made by Christianity and Unitarianism as to the moral qualities with which these declarations are associated in the teacher's mind, and which they are designed to produce in the convert. The machinery is the same; the object the same: our system has the spirit of Christ, and is his, and Christianity is Unitarianism. And were it needful to illustrate this practically, not hard would be the task; for men who have had an abiding and universal sense of the Divine presence, who have shewn that God was in all their thoughts, and who seem to have made the very state of consciousness an act of adoration: men who with filial confidence could cast themselves on his protection, and obey the call of duty, though summoning to the bitterest sacrifices of fortune or of feeling, renouncing every prospect for the testimony of a good conscience, and in reliance on his providence: men who have developed the powers and asserted the rights of intellect, and won from Philosophy her proudest trophies to cast them at the foot of the Cross; and whose exalted talents and unshaken faith were an exhibition of the native affinity of Reason and Revelation: men who have raised the standard of religious freedom, and fought its battles, and suffered in its cause, and prompted its manly and generous assertion, not only for those who were like-minded with themselves, but on be-

half of all, even though holding opinions the most remote, and mad with a bigoted hostility the most inveterate: men who, deeply impressed with the practical importance of their own tenets, could yet most readily allow, and praise, and love goodness in others, whatever they believed, or whatever they rejected: men whose pure lives shewed that even if the head were wrong, the heart was right, and that, if doing Christ's will be building on a rock, they need not dread the storm, come when it may: men who loved their neighbour as themselves, and felt the zeal of benevolence in all its energy, and were in doing good unwearied, and grappled man to their hearts with the affection of a brother: men who through life's changes, and in death's struggles, had hopes fixed on high, ever firm and glorious, drawing their souls to heaven to join the kindred society of the just made perfect, and enjoy the full triumphs of that cause for which they combated, in the subjection of all enemies at the Saviour's footstool:—men such as these has no system done more honour to Christianity than Unitarianism by producing in comparative abundance. The descriptions will suggest to you names whose praise is in all our churches; nay, which pervades our country, and beams forth beyond, even to the very boundaries of enlightened and civilized society.

Here be the tree planted that bears such fruit, and long may it flourish! for it is the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

In describing the spirit of your religion, and of its more illustrious ornaments, I have intimated your duty, and justified your conduct in the erection of this Chapel for its profession and promulgation. O walk ye worthy of your high vocation, and be your actions a living demonstration of the fidelity of the picture! No ampler vindication is needful for your thus coming forward, in the just exercise of your rights, to avow your principles, and invite others to their consideration, than the fact that those principles breathe the spirit of Christ. By the blessing of God, may your success in this righteous cause be proportionate, not to the feeble efforts of its present advocate, not to the power of your own combined zeal, but to its intrinsic goodness and public utility; for it is the cause of undefiled Christianity, it involves the interests of piety and morality, and its spread is that of Truth, and Liberty, and Happiness.

THE END.

Printed by G. SMALLFIELD, *Hackney.*

UNITARIANS NOT GUILTY OF DENYING THE LORD THAT BOUGHT THEM.

A

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

ASSOCIATION OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANS

RESIDING AT

HULL, THORNE, LINCOLN,

AND ADJACENT PLACES,

AT THE

CHAPEL, BOWL-ALLEY-LANE, HULL,

ON THURSDAY, SEPT. 18, 1823.

BY C. WELLBELOVED.

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1824.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon is published in compliance with the earnest request of many of those who heard it; and in the hope that it may contribute, in some degree, to the defence of what the Author believes to be the cause of Christian truth. When he assented to the wishes of his hearers, he stated to them that he should probably suspend the publication, till he had seen the Answer, which it was understood the Ven. & Rev. Archdeacon of Cleveland was preparing to *Three Letters, &c.* which he had lately taken the liberty of addressing to him; in order that he might affix to the Sermon any remarks which the Answer might be found to require. That Answer has at length appeared in an Appendix to the Archdeacon's Third Charge; and the Author now deems it proper, for various reasons, to change his purpose, and to reserve for a separate publication, which shall appear as soon as his other unceasing occupations will allow, what, in justice to others as well as to himself, he is compelled to say in reply.

YORK, *Feb.* 10, 1824.

together in our Father's mansion; they are a fitness for our future inheritance which all must gain before they enter on its possession. How blissful to look on man as the child of God, who, whatever his wanderings and his sufferings, shall be recovered to the right path! How does it shame every superciliious and angry and ungenerous feeling! How does it make the heart glow with philanthropy, and render the brightest hopes subservient to the warmest affections!

If this view of the apostle's argument be correct, if there be such a connexion between the love of God to man, and that of men to each other, then must those systems which give the largest notions of the love of God be most conducive to benevolence. Then must there be something pernicious, so far as their influence is felt and uncorrected, as to their social results, in all creeds which say, in effect, God does not love all, he will not save the non-elect, he will eternally torment, or annihilate even, the wicked. As far as such qualifications are admitted, the argument from his love is nullified, and its tendency is neutralized. If he so love us as yet to destroy some, why may not man's benevolence allow injury and destruction? It is not so delightful to the mind, it is not so expanding to the heart, to contemplate a Father in heaven making such tremendous differences, shewing such tremendous partialities to his common children on the earth. Away

have been led to believe that the Godhead is strictly One; that Jehovah, the Creator of all things, the governor of all worlds, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,"* is the only God, the sole object of religious adoration. We abandon, not merely as unintelligible, but as unscriptural, all the curious distinctions which have been invented respecting the divine nature, as consisting of three distinct persons mysteriously united in one, or of three characters, three properties, three modes, or three subsistencies, whether referring to any internal relations of the Deity to itself, or to any external relations of the Deity to mankind; and we keep steadily to the plain and intelligible doctrine and language of the Jewish † and Christian Scriptures, openly testifying that, "to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus, by whom are all things and we by him,"‡ "one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."§ With the doctrines concerning the deity of Christ, we also reject as equally unscriptural, those which other Christian sects hold to be of such vital importance, relating to his office, and the design and consequences of his death. We see nothing in the pages either of the Old or New Testament, to

* 2 Cor. xi. 4.; Ephes. i. 17. † Deut. vi. 4, &c.
‡ 1 Cor. viii. 6. § 1 Tim. ii. 5.

justify the doctrines which are generally deemed orthodox, relating to original sin, the total corruption of human nature, the moral impotency of man, or the means of obtaining the divine favour. We cannot adopt, because they appear unsupported by the authority of Scripture, the notions which generally prevail concerning the doctrine of atonement, and much less those concerning satisfaction, imputed righteousness, and the efficacy of the merits of Christ. Other opinions also, of minor importance, connected with those which I have now mentioned, and necessarily arising out of them, we refuse to receive, as not only unworthy of the divine character, and in their effects unfavourable to human virtue and happiness, but as utterly devoid of support in the language of either Jesus or his apostles. We profess—(and why should not our professions be credited?) we profess to reject all these doctrines, not because they are above our understanding or contradictory to it, or for any other cause than that we cannot, by the most diligent and faithful investigation, discover them in the word of God, but on the contrary, we see every thing contained in that word, decidedly adverse to them. We avow, (and why should we be considered as insincere in our avowal?) that we are, above all things, anxious to discover what was the faith first delivered to the saints; to separate from that whatever human ingenuity, or human imperfection may have since

ingrafted upon it; and to maintain "the truth as it is in Jesus."

But our professions are not credited; our sincerity is not universally admitted. We are represented as persons daring, proud, and self-willed; as filled with such high conceit of ourselves, as to despise even the doctrines of the gospel of Christ, because they are not level with our understandings, and presumptuously to reject what we cannot comprehend, and because we cannot comprehend it. Or, if we are reluctantly allowed to be sincere, we are treated as ignorant, unable to discern between truth and falsehood. If we assume the character of teachers, we are babes in knowledge, sciolists, half-learned, not qualified to understand for ourselves, nor consequently, to interpret to others the oracles of divine wisdom; and through our ignorance, wresting the Scriptures to our own destruction, and the destruction of those who follow us. If we be those who are taught, we are easily led away by the error of the wicked, and seduced by the sophistries of wretched pretenders to knowledge. And not only are these hard thoughts and these reproachful charges to be endured by us, but the denunciations of divine anger must be applied to us, and our folly, our impiety, our guilt, and our condemnation are all to be sought for, and proclaimed in the unerring language of inspired prophecy. For of whom but of these, did the Holy Spirit warn even the first

disciples to beware, as "grievous wolves, not sparing the flock, but speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them?"* Who but these are "the wise, the disputers of this world," to whom "Christ crucified is foolishness"† and the cause of offence? Who but these are "the enemies of the cross of Christ,"‡ intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind, and not holding the head, from which all the body increaseth, with the increase of God;§ "Antichrists," who refuse to "honour the Son even as they honour the Father;"‖ who "tread under foot the son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing;"¶ "who privily bring in damnable heresies even denying the Lord that bought them,"** for which reason, it must follow, in the language of the apostle, that they will inevitably "bring upon themselves swift destruction."

Very rash and presumptuous would he be, who should undertake to shew that, among the persons of whom these things are said, there are none whose profession is built upon unstable foundations, or whose conduct is, in some respects, such as not to be a credit to the Christian name,—who should assert that all who admit the simple creed of primitive Christianity, do so from actual inquiry,

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* Acts xx. 29, 30. † 1 Cor. i. 20. 23. ‡ Phil. iii. 18.
§ Col. ii. 18. ‖ John v. 23. ¶ Heb. x. 29. ** 2 Pet. ii. 1.

from rational conviction, from a sole and sincere desire of obeying the will of God, and with all that piety of heart, with all that humility of mind, with all that devotedness to God and to Christ, which are essential to the formation of a truly Christian character. There are, I fear, among Unitarians, as there are among all other sects professing Christianity, some who believe what their fathers believed, and because their fathers believed it; some who are merely speculative or nominal Christians, who think little of Scripture as a rule of faith, and little of religion as a rule of life; who hold the truth, but in unrighteousness, being the slaves of folly or of vice, and having their hearts fixed on earthly objects. But from the knowledge I have of this class of Christians, (for such I will call them, though the bigot would deprive them of that honourable appellation,) I feel myself fully authorized, and, in justice to them, bound to assert, that there are among them many who, if by their works we can know them, are men fearing God, and departing from evil; lovers of God, lovers of Jesus Christ, humble and earnest inquirers after divine truth; men who deeply reverence the oracles of heavenly wisdom, who, without reserve and guile, submit to their guidance, and are studious to adorn the common faith of Christians, as well as their peculiar profession, by a holy, a virtuous, and a benevolent life. Fully convinced of this, if the meaning of the inspired

writers whose words are so uncharitably cited, were not so plain as it is, I should yet confidently maintain that it was not of such persons they spoke, when they predicted the errors which were to spring up in the Christian church, and to deform the Christian doctrine; and denounced the inevitable destruction of those who should introduce and propagate them.

"Woe unto you," said our blessed Lord to his apostles, "when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets:"* but, "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach *you*, and cast out your name as evil, for the son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward *is* great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers to the prophets."† If there be any in the present day who may, with peculiar propriety, congratulate themselves that this woe is not denounced against them; if there be any who may take to themselves the consolation of this blessing, they are those who bear the name of Unitarians. Of us, certainly, all do not speak well; few, indeed, can be found, who do not say of us all manner of evil; beyond our own narrow, yet daily enlarging circle, no one biddeth us God speed, or holdeth out to us the hand of Christian fellowship,

* Luke vi. 26. † Ibid, ver. 22.

but many are they who hate us, who reproach us, who separate us from their company, and cast out our name as evil. Of these, some, I have no doubt, act under the influence of a pious, but mistaken zeal, thinking, that by thus opposing us, they are doing God service, retarding the progress of anti-christian error, and contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. Ignorant as I must consider them, of the genuine doctrine of the Gospel; very imperfectly, as they will themselves allow, if at all acquainted with the principles that we hold,* they strenuously maintain as the dictates of Chris-

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* It is notorious that the majority of those who constitute what may be called the religious world, have no knowledge whatever of the Unitarian doctrine, or only such erroneous views of it, as they derive from the exaggerated and designedly alarming representations of it, that are so frequently proceeding from its bitter and bigoted adversaries. Publicly and privately they are warned by their teachers to "have no dealings with" Unitarians, and to avoid the slightest inspection of their works. They listen to the warning; and far from concealing their wilful ignorance, they openly avow it as prudent and even meritorious. Yet, surely it betrays not only a narrow mind, but a degree of apprehension, as to the probable result of an acquaintance with Unitarian principles, little suitable to the confidence with which orthodoxy is boasted of, as the manifest and incontrovertible doctrine of revelation, that such warnings should be given by the learned partizans of orthodoxy, or taken by their disciples. Such unfairness, and such timidity, form no part of the character of Unitarians. They never refuse to read the works of reputed orthodox writers, or to listen to the exposition and the defence of their doctrines. They are not

tian truth, what Jesus and his apostles never taught, and reprobate as pernicious error, what may, and we believe will, hereafter, be generally acknowledged to be alone conformable to the oracles of divine wisdom. Others, I fear, are guided in their opposition to us by motives of a less pure and worthy nature; by views of a secular and selfish kind; by zeal, not in the service of God, but of mammon; that, like the men of Ephesus, they may uphold "the craft by which they get their wealth,"* that they may recommend themselves to those who have the honours and the emoluments of a splendid religious Establishment to bestow; and that they may be in repute as the champions or the partizans of orthodoxy.† But

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afraid to have their own system brought to the severest test; and their teachers are disposed to encourage, not to restrain inquiry. If, however, our orthodox brethren will not read what we write, or listen to what we have to say, are we not entitled to expect that they will abstain from railing and abusive language? Ought they not to be less liberal of their censure of doctrines, which they avowedly will not examine? If they must rebuke, it is surely right that they should first understand.

* Acts xix. 25.

† I by no means wish to imply that all who are well acquainted with Unitarianism, and who openly and zealously oppose it, are under the unholy influence of selfish motives. Far from it. I have no doubt that amongst the most strenuous of our opposers, there are men "fearing God and hating covetousness;" who are actuated solely by a sincere and disinterested love of

whatever may be the motives to which the opposition universally raised against the doctrines of Unitarianism, and those who embrace them, is to be attributed, (of which, after all, God alone, who knoweth the heart, is the proper judge,) the fact is notorious that it is "a sect every where spoken against." I would by no means endeavour to maintain on this ground, that it is the doctrine for which the apostles of our Lord, and even our Lord himself suffered; but conscientiously believing that it is, after a diligent, serious, and impartial investigation of the sacred Scriptures, we may assuredly comfort ourselves under all the bitter and unceasing opposition we are called to endure, by the reflection that our fate is no other than Jesus predicted to his first and his true disciples; no other than we know did actually befal them. The

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what they deem sacred truth. Such men I esteem and honour; and am ever ready to give, what, alas! they will not accept, the right-hand of Christian fellowship and brotherly affection. But there have been, and still are, cases of a contrary nature, too manifest to elude the notice of the most careless observer; too gross to escape the censure of the most tender and candid spirit. And when it is seen how invariably ecclesiastical honours and emoluments are bestowed upon those who engage in the Unitarian controversy on the side of orthodoxy, it is impossible for any one who has any knowledge of the human mind, and any experience in the world, to avoid the suspicion, that some at least of those who assail us with so much bitterness, have "respect unto the recompense of the reward."

words of Jesus, and the experience of himself and his earliest followers, may at least serve to teach us this consoling truth, that the hard thoughts, the reproachful language, and the injurious treatment of men furnish no evidence that the cause against which they are directed, is not the cause of truth, of righteousness, and of God.

The reproaches cast upon the first Christians, were as unjust as they were severe, and such will they also be found, which we have to bear. To prove that it is so in one instance at least, and thus to render it probable, that it is so in many, if not all others, is the object I have proposed in selecting for our present consideration the words of my text. No charge, perhaps, is more frequently alleged against us, than that we *deny the Lord who bought us*, and no conclusion more confidently drawn, than that we shall for this, *bring upon ourselves*, if not *swift*, at least final *destruction*.

Allowing, for a few moments, what I hope, however, shortly to disprove, that they who cite these words against us, judge rightly of their meaning, and that they were originally designed to mark those who denied the Lord Jesus; I would ask, How can they be applied to any, who, whatever may be their views of the doctrine of the Gospel, yet profess to receive that Gospel, and who take upon themselves the name of Christ? How can they be charged with denying Jesus, who put in their claim to be considered as his disciples, who

own him to be "the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* who avow their faith in all his declarations, and their willingness to submit, in all things, to his authority. If we consult the history of our Lord's life, and the writings of his apostles, we shall find that they who denied Jesus in those days, were either those who treated him as a crafty impostor, or a deluded fanatic, and a deceiver of the people; or, who being unable to resist the evidence of his mighty works, secretly believed that God was with him, yet dreading persecution, and "loving the praise of men more than the praise of God," did not dare to make an open avowal of their faith. Now of all the sects into which the Christian world is divided, not one can be produced, the members of which, more strenuously maintain the divine mission of Jesus, or more ardently and successfully oppose the unbeliever. This praise even our most determined adversaries allow, that to Unitarian writers, the Christian world is indebted for some of the ablest works in defence of the divine origin and authority of Christianity. It is surely incredible that the apostle should speak of these when he predicts, that false teachers shall arise, denying the Lord who bought them.

But it will be said, that *we deny his deity*, we refuse to acknowledge him as the second person of the Godhead, we do not allow him to be one

* Matt. xvi. 16.

God with the Father, co-eternal and co-equal, or even God of God. We confess the man Christ Jesus, but deny him as that incarnate, suffering, and dying God, which he is believed to have been, by all others who bear his name. True, we do deny the Jesus of the Athanasian and the Nicene Creeds; of the Liturgy and the Articles of the Established Church; of the Confessions of Faith adopted by almost all the churches of Christendom; but let no one, on this account, apply to us the language of the apostle Peter in my text, till he has proved that the doctrine of these creeds on this point, is indeed the doctrine of the New Testament: for if the framers of these Creeds and Confessions have dared to "preach another Jesus whom the apostles have not preached,"* then, if we would not suffer our minds to be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, we must deny that Jesus, and confess him alone, to whom the apostles have, with one voice, borne witness, "Jesus of Nazarèth, the man approved by God, by miracles and signs, which God wrought by him—the appointed Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."† Whatever Jesus has declared himself to be, whatever his apostles have taught concerning him, that we desire to know and to believe. Every title which Jesus has claimed, we willingly ascribe to him;

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* 2 Cor. xi. 4. † See Acts ii. 22.; iv. 10.; 1 Tim. ii. 5.

to condemn the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" * and with the apostle, we cherish the most lively gratitude to the Son of God for having "given himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works," †—"for being made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be the righteousness of God in him." ‡ As in respect of the person, so in respect of the office of Christ, we are willing and desirous to be guided by the sacred writers. Their language we adopt, on that we form our creed, and in the terms they use, we wish to express it. Rejecting nothing which they have said concerning the design of the coming of Christ, and the benefits resulting from his death; and taking all that they have said, as we conscientiously believe, in the sense they intended it to bear, we trust that we may be confidently assured that the apostle's words, allowing him to have had the Lord Jesus in his view, could not have been designed to presignify Unitarian believers as those who "deny the Lord that bought them."

I might here also observe that these words describe only a part of the evil character of the false teachers, of whom the apostle wishes to warn

* John iii. 16, 17. † Tit. ii. 14. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 21.

the disciples. After a few verses the description is resumed, and many more distinguishing vices are enumerated. To whomsoever, therefore, the words in my text refer, to them all that follows is intended to be applied. But surely the most determined adversary of Unitarian principles, and the severest accuser of his brethren, will not be so blind, or so thoroughly destitute of candour, as to say that the whole description is applicable to the principles of Unitarians, or to those who maintain them. Our text is the only portion which any one will presume to consider in this light. But however common the practice of thus taking passages out of their proper connexion may be, we must protest against it in this and in all cases, as contrary to every rule of just interpretation. It may be necessary to support the cause of orthodoxy, but it is directly opposed to the discovery of scriptural truth.

I have thus far argued upon the supposition that the words of the apostle are properly understood to refer to the Lord Jesus, and to the effects of his mission; and even on this supposition, I have, I trust, shewn that it is an act of injustice to apply them to us. But this injustice will be still more apparent, when I shall have shewn you, as I now proceed to do, that it is not the Lord Jesus of whom the apostle Peter is here speaking. That the unlearned reader should be misled by the version which he has before him, and on which

he naturally, and in general, very properly relies, is not to be wondered at, though a comparison of this passage with one which very closely resembles it in the short Epistle of Jude, might serve to correct the error, and to shew him to whom the apostle's words refer; but they who are not obliged to trust to any version of the apostle's words, are without excuse if they so misinterpret, and so wrongfully apply them. For they must know that the original term used by the apostle,* and rendered by our translators *Lord*, is not that which, in other instances, is employed to denote the Lord Jesus, but in such a connexion as that in which we here find it, is appropriated to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, the sovereign and incontroulable Ruler of nature. The term is almost letter for letter, the same as our word *despot*; by which word, if it were used in a good sense, to denote one who exercises without abusing, supreme and absolute power, it might be not improperly represented. The original term occurs only in a few passages of the New Testament, and, wherever it does occur, connected as in the passage before us, refers without doubt to the supreme and only Potentate, or to use the language of modern orthodoxy, to God the Father.

The first time we meet with it, is in Luke ii. 29, where the devout Simeon, having taken the infant

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* Δεσποτης.

Jesus in his arms, blessed God, and said, "LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The next passage in which it occurs is Acts iv. 24, where we are told that the disciples at Jerusalem, having heard from Peter and John, what had passed at the Jewish council, after the miracle wrought by them on the lame man at the temple, and the persecution they had suffered from the enemies of the truth, lifted up their voices to God and said, "LORD, thou art God who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is;—Grant to thy servants that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child (or servant) Jesus."

We meet with this term no more till we come to the passage now under our consideration; in which there are no such circumstances as are found in the passages I have now cited, to limit its signification.

But in the Epistle of Jude, (ver. 4,) it is used in a connexion which is free from all ambiguity, and, at the same time, strikingly illustrative of the words of my text: "There were certain men," says Jude, "crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lascivious-

ness, and denying the only LORD God and our Lord Jesus Christ."* Here, in our common English version, the same title of *Lord* is assigned both to God and to Jesus Christ, but the terms so translated, are not the same in the original. The first of them is that which occurs in my text, and is manifestedly appropriated to the Father.

The only remaining passage in which we find this word, is in Rev. vi. 10, where "the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held," are represented as crying with a loud voice, and saying, "How long, O LORD, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?"

We seem then warranted in concluding that by the term *Lord*, the apostle Peter did not intend to signify the Lord Jesus, but "the blessed and only

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* Και τον μονον ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΝ Θεον και ΚΥΡΙΟΝ ἡμων Ιησουν Χριστον αρνουμενοι. I am well aware that Mr. Gr. Sharp and Bp. Burgess affirm that the absence of the article before Κυριον proves that the terms *the only Lord God* and *our Lord Jesus Christ* relate to the same person. Several other learned critics before them, have considered this passage in the same light. But the fallacy of the rule on which this interpretation is founded, and the correctness of the English version in this place, which clearly distinguishes *the only Lord God*, from *the Lord Jesus Christ*, have been most satisfactorily established by the *Rev. C. Winstanley*, in his able *Vindication of certain passages in the Common English version of the New Testament.*

Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords,"* whom Jesus himself calls "his Father, and our Father, his God and our God;"† and it is to be regretted that the last authorized translators of the Bible did not mark its peculiar and full import, by rendering it, in every instance, as the late Archbishop Newcome has done in the place before us, —*The sovereign Lord.*‡

But it may, perhaps, be thought by some, that the phrase *who bought them*, cannot properly be used concerning the Father, and therefore justifies the opinion most commonly entertained, that the term *Lord*, in this passage at least, must have been intended to denote Jesus the Son of God. It may be useful, then, if not necessary, to endeavour to shew the proper meaning of this phrase. On entering upon this part of the subject, suffer me to remark that he who is desirous of fully understanding the writers of the New Testament, must be well acquainted with those of the Old;

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* 1 Tim. vi. 15. † John xx. 17.

‡ So Dr. Benson understood it, who, in his note on this place, observes that the word Δεσποτης, is never elsewhere used concerning Christ; and as, in the parallel place, *Jude* ver. 4, this δεσποτης is the *only Lord God*; and evidently distinguished from our Lord Jesus Christ; it is most reasonable, and according to all the just rules of interpretation, to understand it here of *God, the Father. Benson's Paraphr. &c. on the Cath. Epistles.* See also *Whitby's Last Thoughts, Disc.* iv. *p.* 156. *Wetstein, in loc.* says, Δεσποτης semper Deum patrem significat, nunquam filium. Deut. xxii. 5.

since many of the terms and phrases, which these latter employ, in speaking of the mutual relations of God and the Jewish people, are borrowed by the former to describe the relations subsisting between God and Christian believers. This practice arose, not merely from the influence which the constant use of the Jewish Scriptures would inevitably have upon the ideas and the style of the evangelists and apostles, but from this fact, that the introduction of the Gospel not only set aside the Mosaic institutions, imparted divine knowledge to mankind at large, and inspired better hopes, but while it deprived the Jews of the privileges which they had hitherto exclusively enjoyed, conferred them upon those in their stead both Jews and Gentiles, who believed in Him whom God had sent. Between the period of the calling of Abraham and the coming of Christ, the world had been divided into two classes, *the Gentiles* and *the Jews;* the latter holding a peculiar relation to God, the former regarded as wholly estranged from him. After the coming of Christ, the world was still considered as divided into two classes, *believers* and *unbelievers* in the divine mission of Jesus; the believers then took the place which the Jews had occupied, and the unbelievers, both Jews and Gentiles, that which the Gentiles had hitherto held; being regarded as aliens and enemies. Hence it was, that the terms and phrases which had been employed by the Old

Testament writers to describe the state and privileges of the ancient people of God, the Jews, were readily adopted by the writers of the New Testament, to describe the state and privileges of those, who by faith, in Christ, had now become the people and family of God. These remarks are peculiarly applicable to the apostolical epistles, and will be found to contain a simple principle, by the aid of which, many apparent difficulties in them may be easily solved, and the doctrines which have been too commonly deduced from them, shewn to be without any foundation or support. *

Thus, when the writers of the Old Testament speak of God's having appointed the descendants of Abraham to be the depositaries of the great truths of His Existence and His Unity; and to

* I may here, by the way, observe, that if in addition to the remarks above, it be considered that the apostles in these Epistles, especially when they treat of the privileges obtained by faith in Christ, speak of Christian believers not in their *individual*, but in their *collective* capacity, the terms *election*, *justification*, *sanctification*, and others of a similar nature, will be found to bear a meaning very different from that which is almost universally attributed to them. And, consequently, the system which has been established on the misapplication of these terms, and which is usually extolled as comprehending not merely the distinguishing doctrines of the Reformation, but even of the Gospel itself, (a system, however, which may be clearly shewn to be no older than the time of Augustin, or the beginning of the fifth century of the Christian æra,) not being grounded on the word of God, has no just claim to acceptance.

exhibit to the world a specimen of His moral government, they speak of Him, as *forming*, *making*, *creating*, and *electing* them, as *giving them life*, as *begetting* them, as being their *Father*, and as adopting them as His *sons*; as *separating them* to Himself, as making them a *holy people*,* and a *royal priesthood*. In the New Testament, these and similar terms are used to describe the peculiar favour of God to the disciples of his Son; God is *their former*, *their creator*, and *their father*. They are "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works;"† they are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar (or, a purchased) people;"‡ they are "a purchased possession,"§ they are his "elect," and "have received the adoption of sons," being "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."‖

Further, in order the more effectually to secure and to promote the great objects of their selection, God was pleased to conduct the descendants of Abraham into Egypt, and thence, at length, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, to deliver them from the oppression under which they were

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* Deut. vii. 6.; xxviii. 9, &c. † Eph. ii. 10. It is this spiritual creation of which the writers of the New Testament uniformly treat, when they ascribe acts of creation to Christ.

‡ 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9. § Eph. i. 14. ‖ Eph. ii. 19.

held there; and, in reference to this deliverance, he is said to have *saved* them, to have *bought*, *purchased*, and *redeemed* them. "Fear and dread," says Moses in his triumphant ode, recited immediately after the miraculous passage through the Red Sea, "shall fall upon them: by the greatness of thine arm they shall be as still as a stone; till thy people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which thou hast *purchased*."* Remonstrating afterwards with this rebellious race, he exclaims, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy father that hath *bought* thee?"† The Psalmist in later times, referring to the same event, thus addresses God in behalf of his people, suffering under the power of their enemies: "Remember thy congregation, O Jehovah, which of old thou hast *purchased*."‡ And the prophet, foretelling the second great deliverance of the Jewish people, the deliverance from their captivity in Babylon, declares, that "in that day, the Lord shall set his hand again the second time, to *purchase* the remnant of his people which shall be left from Assyria."§

As, by interposing in their favour, God is thus said to have *bought* the Israelites, so, by afterwards

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* Exod. xv. 16. † Deut. xxxii. 6. ‡ Ps. lxxiv. 2.

§ Isa. xi. 11. The English translators have here, *to recover*; but the word in the original is the same as that which, in the preceding instances, they have rendered *bought and purchased*.

permitting them, as the punishment of their apostacy, to be led into captivity by neighbouring nations, he is said to *sell* them. Thus in the book of Judges, we read "that the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he *sold* them into the hands of their enemies:"* which the accompanying history clearly explains as signifying that he suffered their enemies to prevail over them. "How," asks Moses in his admonitory hymn, near the close of his life, how "should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had *sold* them, and the Lord had shut them up?"† The terms *buying* and *selling* are indeed so frequently used in Scripture in a metaphorical sense, that it seems impossible for a reader of ordinary attention and judgment to mistake their signification, wherever they occur. Thus, the prophet calls upon the people in the name of Jehovah, to *buy* wine and milk without money and without price, which he immediately explains thus: "Incline your ear and come to me, be attentive, and your soul shall live."‡ Thus also men are exhorted to "*buy the truth*," to *buy wisdom*, to *buy understanding*;§ that is, highly to prize these things, and by the use of all proper means to acquire them. And in like manner, and on the same principle, they who despise and forsake the

* Jud. ii. 14. † Deut. xxxii. 30. ‡ Isa. lv. 1.
§ Prov. xxiii. 23. See also ch. iv. 5—7; xv. 32; xvi. 16; xvii. 16; xviii. 15; xix. 8; in all which instances the same word is rendered in the authorized version *get* or *getteth*.

truth are said to *sell* it; and Ahab, king of Israel, relinquishing the service of the true God, and giving himself up to idolatry, is represented as "*selling* himself to work wickedness."*

It is in strict conformity with the phraseology so prevalent in the Old Testament, that in the writings of the New Testament, sometimes God himself, and sometimes He whom God sent, is said to *purchase*, to *buy*, to *redeem*, those who hear and embrace the doctrine of the Gospel, and are thus delivered from the slavery of idolatrous and evil principles and practices, to which they were before sold or addicted. "Ye are not your own," says the apostle, "ye are *bought* with a price."† "Who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem* us from all iniquity."‡—"Ye were not *redeemed* with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ."§ Other similar passages might be produced if necessary, but if what has now been said be properly considered, it will, I am persuaded, be sufficient to shew, that when the *Sovereign Lord* is said, by the apostle, to have *bought* those concerning whom he is writing, nothing else is meant than that he had employed such means as his wisdom had devised, and which, therefore, ought

* 1 Kings xxi. 25. † 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.; vii. 23. ‡ Tit. ii. 14.
§ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

to have been efficacious to bring them from the darkness and misery of their former state, whether Jewish or heathen, and to make them joyful partakers of the privileges of the gospel of Christ. As no one ever imagines that God paid any price, or offered any equivalent to Pharaoh king of Egypt, or to any other of their succeeding oppressors, when he *bought* the Israelites, or *redeemed* them from slavery and captivity, so when such phraseology is employed in the New Testament, in reference to those who had been freed from the bondage of the Mosaic law, of heathen superstition, of ignorance, or of vice, it ought never to be considered as teaching or intimating that Jesus gave, or the Father received any equivalent, without which the salvation of mankind could not have been effected. They who were brought from darkness to light, converted from the evil of their ways, and led to the true knowledge and the worship of God, and to a steady obedience to his will, are said, in conformity with Jewish ideas and forms of speech, to be *purchased* and *redeemed*, either by, or to, God. And, as the great means of effecting this was the doctrine of Christ confirmed by his death, and the subsequent events of his resurrection, his ascension, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to which his death was necessary; the *purchase* or the *ransom* or the *redemption* is generally and very naturally described as being made by his blood.

When, therefore, the apostle speaks of persons who "denied the sovereign Lord who bought them," he may refer to some who, having received the grace of God by Jesus Christ, either abused, or rejected it; who having been instructed in the way of divine truth, and admitted to the honours and the privileges of the people of God, apostatized from the faith, or held it so much in unrighteousness, as to derive from it no benefit themselves, and to corrupt the minds, and destroy the character and the peace of others. And that to persons of this description, the apostle did refer, may, I think, be concluded from all that follows. For it is certainly of the same persons that he speaks, when he says (ver. 10, &c.) that "they walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government;"—that they are "presumptuous, self-willed, not afraid to speak evil of dignities;—having eyes full of adultery—beguiling unstable souls; having a heart exercised with covetous practices;—through covetousness making merchandise of believers with feigned words;—promising them liberty, while they are themselves the slaves of corruption. "For," concludes the apostle, "if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the

way of righteousness, (the doctrine of Christ,) than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it is happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

The short epistle of Jude bears a striking resemblance throughout, to this chapter in the second Epistle of Peter, and clearly refers to the same persons. "Beloved," says that apostle,* "when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write to you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only [sovereign] Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.—These speak evil of those things which they know not:—they are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling *words*, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.—These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit." In fine, these factious and unruly men, are those, of whom Paul speaks when writing to Titus, he says,† "There are many unruly and vain talkers

* Ver. 3, &c. † Tit. i. 10—16.

and deceivers, especially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.—Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, who turn from the truth. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them who are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they DENY HIM, being abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate."

From a careful comparison of these passages and others similar to them, I think there can be no doubt that the men whom Peter censures as those who *denied the sovereign Lord that bought them*, were the Jewish zealots, who are spoken of in every apostolical epistle, as generally displaying an evil character, and as being disturbers of the peace of the Christian church. They professed to believe in Jesus, but unwilling to trust wholly to faith in him; desirous of engrafting Judaism on the stock of Christianity, and of compelling Gentile believers to observe the Mosaic law, and controverting the apostle's doctrine, that the Gospel set men at liberty from all carnal ordinances, they introduced "destructive factions*, and caused many

* Αἱρεσεις απωλειας, improperly rendered in the common English version, "damnable heresies."

to follow their pernicious ways." Besides their attachment to the Mosaic institutions, they appear likewise, in many instances at least, to have mingled with these institutions the dogmas of the Oriental philosophy, which after the time of the apostles, spread very widely in the Christian church, in the various forms of Gnosticism; and in imitation of those who professed that philosophy, "they made merchandize of their hearers, selling their doctrine at a great price." Thus rejecting the pure doctrine of Christ, and refusing the glorious liberty of the Gospel, they might well be described as "denying the sovereign Lord who had bought them;" who had by the mission of his Son, provided the means of redeeming them from the bondage of the Jewish law and every earthly yoke. But with still greater propriety might those of them (and such we know there were) be thus described, who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, whose corrupt and lawless conduct reflected discredit on the profession they made; who were but slightly attached to a cause which had no influence on their virtue or their happiness, and who scrupled not to abjure the Christian name when it exposed them to suffering and danger. Such may well be said to *deny the sovereign Lord who bought them.*

I cannot, for a moment, suppose that the interpretation of the words of my text, which I have thus at great length set before you, my Christian

friends, will be disputed by any one. And if it be allowed to be correct, these words can have no reference to any class of men, or any sect of professing Christians in the present day; but they "wrest the Scriptures," who presume so to apply this passage.*

With whatever boldness and perseverance, therefore, the ignorant or the bigoted may, by such misapplication of Scripture language, endeavour to bring our opinions or ourselves under the censure of an apostle, to render us the objects of aversion to our fellow-men and our fellow-Christians, and thus to move us from our stedfastness, we may be assured that it is without any sufficient warrant. The leading principles of that system of faith which is now, by way of distinction, called Unitarianism, I think I may venture to assert, are the principles which Jesus and his

* In the same manner it might be shewn that none of those passages in the New Testament, which are usually pressed into a similar service, have any relation to opinions now maintained in any part of Christendom. Even those which have been so freely urged, ever since the Reformation, against our brethren of the Church of Rome, as express prophecies of the errors into which that Church has fallen, if properly examined, would, I am persuaded, be found to have been originally intended to serve a very different purpose; to expose and to censure factions, which have long, very long since, ceased to divide and harass the Christian Church, and to point out, and to check, errors both in doctrine and in practice, which, many ages ago, sunk into discredit and oblivion.

apostles taught, against the corruptions of which they solemnly warned their hearers, and which they earnestly exhorted them to guard with vigilance, and to maintain in purity. So far then from being subject to the censures of these heavenly teachers,—so far from belonging to the number of those, against whom they denounced the just vengeance of the God of truth as the punishment of their pernicious deeds, we, who maintain and guard these principles, may take to ourselves comfort from the well-grounded assurance, that we are contending for the faith which was at first delivered to the saints, opposing the progress of anti-christian error, and aiding to advance the triumphs of pure and undefiled religion.

I will, however, acknowledge, my friends, that both we and others, who may think that this language of the apostle which they apply to us, can, in no respect, be applicable to them, may be guilty of denying the *sovereign Lord who bought us*, and thus bring upon ourselves final condemnation, though not in the manner usually imagined.

If, through the fear or the love of men,—if, in order to avoid the obloquy, the inconvenience, and the loss which they must experience, who venture to contradict established or popular opinions ;—or if, to gain the respect, the honours, and the emoluments which attend on those alone who are the professors and the advocates of the religion that is patronized by the civil power, we abjure or con-

ceal the dictates of our consciences, the doctrines which we are firmly persuaded are recommended in the Gospel of Christ, we then *deny the sovereign Lord who bought us.* We renounce our subjection to his supreme authority, and submit to the will of our fellow-men ; the reverence which is due to Him alone who made us, we pay to his weak and erring creatures, and the favour and approbation of our all-wise Governor and future impartial Judge, we treat as of less value than the smiles and the applause of those who are frail and fallible like ourselves.

If, through criminal weakness of mind, a dread of singularity, a fear of reproach or ridicule, or any other unworthy motive, we follow a multitude to do, what at the same time, we believe to be evil, if without due consideration, or with the desire of complying with whatever may be the way of the world, we resign ourselves to the impetuous stream of fashionable folly, to the neglect of our religious, social, and domestic duties, to the injury of those over whose moral safety we are bound to watch, to the irreparable injury of our own hearts, to the waste of the means of beneficence, with which Providence may have blessed us, to the offence of more consistent disciples of Christ, and to the discredit, both of the Christian name, and of the peculiar profession, which, in words, we maintain ; then, also, we may be justly said to *deny the Lord who bought us,* to renounce

obedience to Him who has commanded us "not to be conformed to this world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds;" and who has graciously afforded us, in the Gospel of his Son, the most efficacious means of raising our souls above all the little vanities of time and sense, of fixing our affections upon things that are truly worthy of the heirs of immortality, and of passing through these temporal scenes, so as finally to secure those that shall be eternal.

And if, through want of self-government, of a due controul over our inferior appetites and passions,—if, through neglect of those means of holiness and virtue, which are provided in the precepts, and the promises, and the examples in the Word of God, we give ourselves up to the commission of evil, forgetful of our present awful obligations, despising the high destination to which we ought to aspire, and surrendering ourselves as slaves to sin, then most truly and most fatally do we *deny the sovereign Lord who bought us;* who, by the constitution of our nature, formed us for virtue, by the dispensations of his providence encourages and assists us in the practice of it, and by the mission of his Son has done all that is necessary to be done to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify us to himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

In such cases as these, my friends, we may perceive the only just occasions for fear, lest we come within the class of those to whom the words of the

apostle, in my text, can be now in any sense applied. And to such a denial of the *sovereign Lord who bought them*, all are, without due care, equally exposed. Our views of Christian truth may be erroneous, yet our lives may do honour to the Christian name; but if our temper be unholy, and our conduct at variance with the precepts of Christ, our faith though of unsullied purity, will avail us nothing. If with perfect sincerity and uprightness, we diligently employ all the means in our power to obtain a knowledge of the genuine doctrines of the Gospel, and steadily maintain those good works, which the Gospel enjoins on all its professors, whatever our opinions may be, we cannot be charged with *denying the sovereign Lord who bought us.* To the sincere disciples of Christ, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit, who devoutly study to know the will of their Master, that they may more perfectly obey it, though they should fail in their search after truth, there can be no condemnation. They, and they only, are in fatal error, who professing to know God, in their works deny him; who hesitate not to call Jesus their Lord, but do not the things which he has commanded. To such and to such alone, are his own impressive words addressed: "Not every one who saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he who doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we

not taught in thy name, and in thy name cast out demons, and in thy name done many wonderful works; and then I will profess unto them, "I never knew you," I never owned you as my followers, "depart from me ye who work iniquity." Whatever, then, may be the articles of our creed, let us be, above all things, solicitous that our hearts be pure and our lives holy, and under the government of a pure and holy God, it must be well with us both now and for ever.

FINIS.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

THREE LETTERS addressed to the VEN. & REV. FRANCIS WRANGHAM, M. A. Archdeacon of Cleveland, in reply to his Remarks on Unitarianism and Unitarians, contained in his Charge to the Clergy of his Archdeaconry, delivered in July, 1822. Second edition, price 3*s.* 6*d.*

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A

SERMON

PREACHED ON

SUNDAY, JANUARY 23, 1825,

TO

A CONGREGATION OF PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

IN ST. SAVIOURGATE, YORK,

IN AID OF A

SUBSCRIPTION FOR THE ERECTION

OF A

UNITARIAN CHAPEL

IN CALCUTTA.

BY C. WELLBELOVED.

YORK:

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1825.

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THE following Sermon was composed, with no view of its being committed to the press; but the preacher did not feel himself at liberty to reject the earnest and unanimous request of his audience that it might be published, accompanied by the liberal offer of one of the members of his congregation to defray the expense of the publication. Having more leisure to revise than he had to write it, he has added much, which want of time compelled him to omit, when preparing it for the pulpit; and he has greatly enriched it, as he thinks, with considerable extracts from a highly interesting work, not yet generally known to Unitarians in this country, with the loan of which he was kindly favoured by J. R. Freme, esq. of Liverpool. If this Discourse should excite, in the minds of those who may honour it with a perusal, any degree of that zeal to promote the great object it was designed to recommend, which they manifested to whom it was delivered, the preacher will have reason to rejoice that while complying with the wishes of those whom he is ever most anxious to please, he has been enabled to extend his services in that good cause to which he is so firmly attached.

YORK, *Feb.* 4, 1825.

If any profit should arise from the sale of this Discourse, it will be applied to the purposes in aid of which it was delivered.

A SERMON.

Acts xvi. 9.

AND A VISION APPEARED TO PAUL IN THE NIGHT; THERE STOOD A MAN OF MACEDONIA, AND PRAYED HIM, SAYING, COME OVER INTO MACEDONIA, AND HELP US.

The personal ministry of Jesus was very wisely confined to the land in which he was born; and while he remained with his disciples, he suffered them not to extend their labours beyond the same narrow limits. "Go not," said he to them, when he first sent them forth to proclaim the approach of the kingdom of heaven, "into the way of the Gentiles; and into *any* city of the Samaritans, enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." * He predicted, indeed, on various occasions, the future general diffusion of his Gospel, the rejection of the Jews, and the call of the Gentiles; and when he was about to leave his disciples, and "to enter into his glory," he commissioned "the eleven to go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature:" † yet it does not appear to have been the design of Providence

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* Matt. x. 5, 6. † Mark xvi. 14, 15.

that this commission should be immediately executed. For some time the labours of the apostles were confined to Jerusalem; at length they were extended to the Samaritans; but it was not till several years had elapsed after the ascension of their Lord, nor even then, without a supernatural divine admonition, that they understood that "to the Gentiles also, God had granted repentance unto life." * Many disciples had been scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, and had travelled as far as Phœnice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, but they had "preached the word to none, but to the Jews only." † Even Paul himself, of whom, at his conversion, our Lord had spoken to Ananias as 'a vessel chosen by him to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings, as well as the sons of Israel,' ‡ spent three years, according to the Jewish mode of computation, in some retreat in Arabia; three years more at Tarsus, his native city, and one year, at least, at Antioch in Syria, before he was separated with Barnabas, for the work to which he had been destined. § And still the work proceeded slowly. His first journey, as the apostle of the Gentiles, which occupied two or three years, ‖ extended only to the island of Cyprus, and a small portion of the continent of Asia Minor: and when,

* Acts xi. 18. † Ver. 19. ‡ Ix. 15. § Compare Gal. i. 17, 18, 21. Acts ix. 30; xi. 25, 26; xiii. 2. See Lardner's Works, Vol. vi. p.p. 257—269. 8vo. edition. ‖ Lardner, ubi sup. p. 272.

having abode "a long time," * after his return with the disciples at Antioch, he proposed a second journey to Barnabas, it was only for the purpose of visiting the brethren in every city where they had already preached the word of God. His views enlarged, indeed, as he proceeded; and having confirmed the churches which he had before founded, he carried the good tidings of the kingdom of heaven into regions in which it is probable they had not yet been heard. But another supernatural communication was necessary to admonish him, that his labours were not to be confined to the provinces of Asia Minor; and to direct his attention to the polished cities of Macedonia and Greece. "When they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia," says the sacred historian, who accompanied the apostle on this journey, "and were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia, † after they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us." No one who knows any thing of the character of the apostle, can suppose that he would hesitate to receive the divine admonition, or

* Acts xiv. 28. Two or three years. Lardner, ubi sup. p.p. 272—276.

† Acts xvi. 6—10.

to comply with the entreaty. Accordingly, Luke informs, that "after he had seen the vision," he and his companions "immediately endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel to them."

When we consider the ardour by which the great apostle of the Gentiles was so eminently distinguished, the accurate knowledge he possessed of the deplorable state of the heathen world,* and the lively compassion he manifested for those who had wandered far from the paths of virtue and of happiness: when we also consider how highly he prized the Gospel of Christ, what costly sacrifices he had made to secure for himself its noble privileges, what efficacy he attributed to it, in purifying the affections, in regulating the conduct, in restoring to human nature its true dignity, and in filling the heart of man with peace and joy, we may, perhaps, for a moment, feel some surprize that he did not enter with less delay on the work for which he had been chosen; that he was not more eager to carry the knowledge of the one true God, and of Jesus, whom he had sent, into the very empire of idolatry; that he did not at once attack the strong holds of superstition, and seek for the crown of his rejoicing, amongst those who were more than all others, "devoted to the worship of dæmons." † But the apostle knew that God's own

* See Romans i. † Acts xvii.

time is the best time; and he looked to Him who gave him his work, for directions, when, and where, and to what extent he should pursue it.

From the first he regarded himself as "a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise:" * and so far as it depended upon himself, was ready to preach the Gospel to every creature; but he could not "stretch himself beyond the measure of the rule which God distributed to him;" † and that measure was regulated by infinite wisdom. He who caused the Sun of righteousness to arise, wisely ordained that its rays, like those of the natural sun, should not burst forth instantaneously, and with equal splendour, on every region under the heavens, but that they should proceed from early dawn to mid-day brightness, and extend themselves wider and still wider, till they shed a perfect day. The progress of the Gospel was to be extensive and rapid; but, at the same time, gradual; and the labourers, whom the lord of the harvest sent forth, were to scatter the seed of the Gospel on successive portions of the field of the world, as they were successively broken up and prepared to receive it. The regions nearest to Judæa being, if not the first to hear the report of "the wonderful works of God," the best able to ascertain the truth of what they heard, were, as might be expected, the first to be favoured

* Romans i. 14, 15. † 2 Cor. x. 13.

and benefited by the labours of the apostles; and in more distant countries, every attempt would have been premature, and consequently fruitless; till, by the annual visits which the Jews of the dispersion, and devout Gentiles, in conformity with the Mosaic law, paid to Jerusalem, where the flourishing state of the Christian church could not fail to excite attention, the news of the kingdom was gradually and widely diffused, and some curiosity, if not anxiety, was raised in the minds of many, to whom, on their return, these would naturally communicate what they had seen and heard, to receive from the professed preachers of the Gospel, a fuller "declaration of the things which were most surely believed" amongst the disciples of Jesus.

The conduct of Divine Providence in respect of the first promulgation of the Gospel, and of the apostles of our Lord, who were under its special direction, ought to serve as an admonition and a lesson to those who, animated by a spirit of piety and of benevolence, are desirous of recovering mankind from the wretched and deplorable state into which a departure from the worship of the true God has reduced them, and to extend the knowledge and the practice of Christianity to all the nations of the earth. When we reflect upon our own happiness in the knowledge and profession of the Gospel, we cannot fail to desire that all men should partake of the same felicity: when we con-

template the miseries which false religion inflicts upon those who are under its influence, it is impossible not to wish for its utter and speedy extinction; when we contrast the state of those nations which, however unworthily, bear the name of Christian, with that of nations which are still immersed in the darkness of heathenism, we must ardently wish to extend to these, some portion, at least, of that light which we enjoy, some share of the felicity which we experience. But in the accomplishment of our desires, something more than the purest benevolence is needful. We must follow the guidance of that wisdom which is from above. We must not only pursue the best ends, but we must be careful to employ the best means. We must be well assured that we are not only doing what "the Father of the spirits of all flesh" designs to have done, but in the manner which his wisdom suggests, and at the time which He appoints. We must be satisfied, not only that the work in which we are engaged, is the work of God, but that, in the course of his providence, he encourages us to look for his co-operation. For if it be not his hour, if the means we employ, be not such as he approves, our labours cannot be crowned with lasting and final success. But may we not be too timid, too cautious, and too tardy? May we not mistake indolence for discretion, and exalt a culpable indifference, into a wise and prudent expectation of divine counsel and direction? Perhaps

we may; and therefore, we should be jealous of ourselves; and in this, as in all cases of active duty, we should most faithfully and rigorously scrutinize our motives, and bring them to the test of the principles of a sincere and humble piety, of an enlarged and genuine benevolence.

Unitarians have been frequently censured by reputedly orthodox believers, for not having sent forth any foreign missions; and their alleged inertness in a work which excites the zeal of almost every other Christian sect, is represented as indicating an utter disregard of the interests of the Gospel, and of the salvation of mankind. It is not long since a dignified clergyman, in our own neighbourhood, in his usual sarcastic tone, exclaimed—"Let us try Socinianism" (the epithet by which he chooses always, however wrongfully, to designate Unitarianism) "by its fruits...Dr. Priestley frequently, in his vituperatory manner, reproaches the orthodox with the impediments which their mysteries throw in the way of converting the Jews, Heathens, and Mahometans; particularly the latter, whom he tenderly and justly compassionates amidst the blackness of their more-than-Egyptian darkness. Well then: what tropical waste, have these apostles or 'No-apostles', of Socinianism traversed? What polar rigours have they braved,

> To plant successfully sweet Sharon's rose
> On icy plains, and in eternal snows?

In what barbarous island, amidst what trackless

depths, have their *glad tidings* been heard? If we say, "The footsteps of their missionaries, where are they"? an echo will answer, "Where are they"? *

I will not affirm that our conduct, in this respect, has been altogether unblameable? Though our circumstances have been such as to preclude the possibility of any extensive exertions, perhaps we might have bestowed a little labour on some portion of the wide field of the Gospel harvest. Though, according to the natural course of things, we could not have contributed much to aid the triumphs of pure Christianity, we might, perhaps, with some degree of encouraging success, have engaged in its cause. Yet I will not allow that the purity of our faith or the ardour of our piety, or the extent of our benevolence can be fairly decided on this ground. We may, it is true, have amongst us, as, no doubt, the orthodox sects around us, have amongst them,

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* *Archdeacon Wrangham's Charge, delivered in August,* 1823, *&c. p.* 85, 86.

The same questions might be asked concerning a highly respectable body of men, who have, of late, been very anxious to vindicate themselves against the suspicion of 'Socinianism', and to whom none will refuse the 'right-hand of Christian fellowship. The Society of Friends have sent forth no preaching missionaries, and yet they are not thus taunted; the soundness of their faith is not brought to such a test. In the exercise of their accustomed prudence, they have given an example, which the zealous of other sects will do well to follow. They have sent forth apostles not to preach mysteries, but to extend civilization; not to teach the tongue of the savage to repeat an incomprehensible creed, but to instruct him in the useful arts of life, and to excite in him a desire of its comforts. Though "aware of the infinite value of

some, who knowing little or nothing of the genuine spirit of the Gospel, cannot feel any very earnest desire to impart the Gospel to others. But I will venture to say, that as a body, we are as firmly and as sincerely attached to the religion of Jesus, and as desirous that its enlightening doctrines, and purifying precepts, and animating principles, and consolatory promises, and elevating hopes should be known, and received, and prized by all mankind, as any of those can be, who arrogantly call themselves 'The temple of the Lord,' and would scornfully thrust us into the court of the Gentiles. And if we cannot be fully justified for having hitherto sent forth no missionaries to proclaim "our glad tidings," the very tidings which Jesus and his apostles published, in distant and in heathen nations, we can,

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Christianity," they wisely defer the attempt to plant it in a soil which has not first been well cultivated. They are content to "preach religion by example, and to prepare the Indians, by more means than one, for the reception and acknowledgement of the Gospel." See *An Account of Two Attempts towards the civilization of some Indian nations. Philadelphia*, 1805.

It has been truly observed that "as good a spirit on this subject has existed in the great body of Unitarians as of the orthodox; and very many have been the Unitarians, who, from zeal for the diffusion of Christianity, have contributed to the support of Orthodox Foreign Missionary Societies, only because Unitarian associations have not been formed for the conversion of the Heathen." *The Christian Examiner, for July and August*, 1824. *Boston, (N. A.)* p. 212.—This remark may be peculiarly applicable to our trans-atlantic brethren; yet I have known some among English Unitarians, who have manifested their real in the same manner. To the support of missionary schools, many I believe, have cheerfully contributed.

perhaps, offer such pleas as the candid will allow ought to save both ourselves and our religious faith from the bitterness of sarcasm, and the severity of censure. For,

First. It may be observed, That we do not feel the same impelling motive by which the zeal of other sects is excited into such prompt and vigorous action. We do not interpret, as others do, the declaration of our Lord to his apostles, that 'he who believeth not on him shall be damned.'* We do not think that none will be saved, unless they call upon themselves the name of Christ. We cannot so read either the book of nature, or the book of grace, as to learn from either, that God brings his rational children into existence, under a sentence of eternal misery, from which faith in Christ alone, can redeem them. We cannot feel ourselves warranted either by reason or Scripture, to look upon the whole pagan world, as lying under the power of an omnipotent 'wicked one', from which it can be delivered only by the successful labours of Christian missionaries. They who can so think of God, and of his creatures, have indeed a motive to unlimited and uninterrupted exertion, which is sufficient to rouse the most indolent who possess but a spark of benevolence, and to support the most timid in the midst of the most pressing difficulties, and the most terrific dangers, in their endeavours to save

* Mark xvi. 16.

myriads of human souls from everlasting perdition.* When we consider by what demonstrations of divine power, Christianity was at first ushered into the world; when we reflect on the sufferings which its distinguished Founder, and his immediate disciples endured in their labours to establish it; when we observe the great and beneficial change it has effected, and is still capable of effecting in the condition of mankind, and how conducive it is of public and private, of social and domestic happiness, we cannot be unconcerned about the interests of Christianity, or indifferent as to its prevalence in the world. When we contemplate the extent of those regions on which the thick darkness of Paganism still rests, and the mighty number of rational and accountable beings, who suffer all its inconveniences both natural and spiritual, intellectual and moral, we cannot refrain from earnestly beseeching the Great Father of light, that he would disperse this dismal gloom,

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* The Baptist missionaries at Serampore, apologising for employing native preachers, "but poorly qualified for so important a charge," ask, "What could be done in so great a necessity, when so many souls were daily passing out of time, and beyond recovery, without Christ, and without hope in the world? The missionaries could not shut their ears against the cries of the perishing; and they could find no better helpers to go with them to the wreck, to endeavour to save some." See *Missionary Register, for* 1820, *p.* 263. They who entertain such views of the state of the unconverted Heathen, ought to "give no sleep to their eyes, nor slumber to their eye-lids," until they have done all in their power to rescue their Pagan brethren from so awful a state; or have, at least, delivered their own souls, by "warning them to flee from the wrath to come."

and gladden all nations with the rays of his heavenly truth. When we think of the forlorn state of that mind which is destitute of the knowledge of an almighty, all-wise, and most benevolent Creator and Ruler of the world, and under the degrading and often terrific influence of polytheism and idolatry, or hear of the painful superstitions and the gross immoralities which Heathenism not merely tolerates but encourages; our hearty desire and prayer to God is, that he would give to his Son "the Heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession!" Yet deeply as we commiserate their condition, and unfeignedly as we should rejoice to see it changed and improved by the universal diffusion of the Gospel, the urgency of the case cannot appear so extremely great to us, as it must appear to those who believe that 'every soul out of Christ' will perish everlastingly: especially if, at the same time,

Secondly. We have felt doubtful whether Providence had yet called us to such exertions. We may have considered ourselves justified in entertaining such a doubt, and consequently, in directing our zeal, and devoting our labour to some other objects, when we observed the little success which had attended the long-continued and strenuous exertions of our more active brethren. 'The rose of Sharon may have been planted on icy plains', but has it flourished there? Has not its fragrance been wasted; have not its blossoms drooped, and wither-

ed, and died? 'In barbarous islands and amidst trackless depths, glad tidings may have been proclaimed,' but who has heard and received them? 'The footsteps of missionaries' may be imprinted on tropical sands and polar snows, but where are the footsteps of multitudes flocking to receive the proffered blessing, and exhibiting no backward course? May not these pious and benevolent men, when they look among the Heathen for the seals of their ministry, adopt the complaint of the ancient prophet, and exclaim "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" * Great and long-continued exertions have been made; the treasures of the wealthy have been most liberally expended; many in humble stations have given "according to their power, yea, and beyond their power;" the needy have willingly contributed a share of their pittance, and the poor widow hath cast in her last mite: many privations have been endured; the most appalling dangers have been braved, and valuable lives have been sacrificed—and what has been accomplished? What Dagon has fallen before the ark of the Lord, that some officious priest hath not restored? Where are the ruins of the temple or the altar that has been overthrown and forsaken by the once-deluded votaries of idolatry? What nation or tribe "has changed its gods, which yet are no gods?" † "When the enterprize

* Isa. liii. 1. † Jer. ii. 11.

of foreign missions was commenced, it was confidently believed, that another day of Pentecost was at hand:" * "Nations were to be born in a day." But how has this expectation been realized? Flattering accounts of the past are indeed sometimes communicated, or splendid hopes as to the future are announced, but these hopes too commonly prove illusive, and those accounts will not bear a scrupulous investigation. In one or two of the islands of the Pacific Ocean, the seed of the word may have sprung up, like the vegetation of the natural soil, with an almost miraculous rapidity, and yielded a harvest rich beyond all expectation; but in most other regions, if it have not fallen upon stony places where it has been quickly scorched, and withered away, it has, for the most part, put forth only a weak and sickly plant, incapable of yielding fruit to perfection. In no country have there been missionaries more enlightened, more zealous, or more able, than in Asiatic India; in no region, I believe, have more strenuous efforts been made to extend the knowledge of the Gospel; but hitherto, the success has been, by no means, commensurate with the talents, the zeal, and the labour that have been there employed. We have been told, indeed, that "Christianity has made such an advance in that country, that it has now become absolutely necessary to prepare books for Hindoo

* *The Christian Examiner, &c. for July and August, p.* 315.

preachers, and means for enlarging the minds of *hundreds* of native Christians in knowledge;" and with somewhat more precision, these many hundreds are elsewhere spoken of as "more than a thousand," or "nearly a thousand," or "perhaps a thousand natives who have given up idolatry by embracing Christianity." Yet a very intelligent person, * himself a missionary, and residing in the midst of this population, on being questioned distinctly concerning the number and character of the converted natives of India, having cited the above statements, replies; "The result of my own observations, of my examination of the different missionary accounts to which I have had access, and of my inquiries of those who, in some cases, have had better means of knowing or of being informed than myself, is, that the number of native converts properly so called, now living and in full communion with one or other of the Protestant Missionary Churches, does not exceed three hundred. It will give me pleasure to see it proved that there are nearly a thousand baptized natives; but it will not surprize me, if an accurate investigation should shew that the number of such persons is even less than that which I have stated." † And an illustri-

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* The Rev. W. Adam, of Calcutta.

† See *Correspondence relative to the Prospects of Christianity, and the means of promoting its reception in India. Cambridge, (N. A.)* 1824. *p.* 38, 39.

this native,* of whom I shall shortly have occasion to speak more particularly, upon being asked the same question, observes; "The Baptist missionaries at Serampore determinedly contradict any one that may express a doubt as to the success of their labours; and they have repeatedly given the public to understand that their converts were not only numerous, but also respectable in their conduct; while the young Baptist missionaries in Calcutta, though not inferior to any missionaries in India in abilities and acquirements, both European and Asiatic, nor in Christian zeal and exertions, are sincere enough to confess openly, that the number of their converts, after the hard labour of six years, does not exceed *four*; and, in like manner, the Independent missionaries of this city, whose resources are much greater than those of the Baptists, candidly acknowledge that their missionary exertions for seven years have been productive of only *one convert*." † An apprehension, that the world

* Rammohun Roy. See *Correspondence, &c. p.* 126.

† Mr. Adam, who also mentions these extraordinary facts, informs us, that of the four, one is dead, and another has partially relapsed. See *the Fifth Annual Report of the Calcutta Baptist Missionaries, p.* 5—9. He adds that the Independent missionaries have hopes of *two* others. See *Missionary Chronicle for May*, 1823, *p.* 17. In May, 1822, the Church missionaries at Burdwan, baptized *two* natives, the first converts they have made. See *Fifth Report of the Calcutta Committee, &c.* And the Rev. Mr. Sutton before his departure for England, informed Mr. Adam, that at Moorshudabad, where he had laboured, there were *five* native converts.

even where most civilized, was not fully prepared for the reception of the pure Gospel of Christ; something more than suspicion, excited and justified by facts which occasionally transpired, that missionary labours were crowned with very inadequate and trifling success;* a desire to wait, not for any heavenly vision indeed, but for clearer providential indications than they had yet perceived, that the proper time for engaging in such labours had arrived, have hitherto restrained Unitarians from giving this direction to their zeal, and disposed them to rest satisfied with spending the little strength they possess, in endeavours to accomplish what appeared to be unquestionably within the line of their duty. Especially since,

Thirdly. They do not possess, to any large extent, the resources which are necessary to the effectual support of foreign missions, and find at home objects which they deem of at least equal importance, and requiring no small degree of exertion. Though there is reason to believe that Unitarian principles prevail to a much wider extent than fashion or interest will suffer to appear, yet the number of those who dare openly to avow these principles, is comparatively very small. Unitarians, form, like the first disciples of Christ, only "a little flock;" and like them also, reckon among their number, "not many wise men after the flesh, not

* See *Appendix*.

many mighty, not many noble." If it should be allowed that we might, in some cases, at least, contribute more of our substance in aid of the cause of Christian truth, it must, at the same time, be acknowledged, that in general, we contribute liberally. Frequent and urgent demands are made upon us, in support of such plans as are deemed advisable and necessary to diffuse the knowledge of genuine Christianity amongst even those who regard themselves as exclusively the disciples of Christ; and these demands are answered with readiness and zeal. To instruct the unenlightened Heathen, and to convey the glad tidings of the Gospel into regions that have never heard the joyful sound, is, undoubtedly, a blessed labour of compassion and of love; but a Unitarian, living in the midst of the highest mental cultivation, and amongst those who "make their boast of God, as knowing his will, and approving the things that are more excellent, and are confident that they themselves are guides of the blind, and a light to them who are in darkness," * will perceive and lament the prevalence of much error both in principle and practice, which he will be anxious, under a deep sense of duty both to God and man, if possible, to remove. He will grieve to behold the purity of Christian faith tarnished by the corruptions of human folly, and the efficacy of Gospel precepts, and of Gospel

* Rom. ii. 17—19.

motives, weakened, if not destroyed, by an unholy mixture of doctrines utterly inconsistent with the truth as it is in Jesus. The world that calls itself Christian he will regard as in need of being "re-christianized;" and those who deem themselves "perfect men," he will esteem, if not as "babes in Christ," yet as "needing to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God." The honour of the Gospel, therefore, and the comfort of those who are, in the stricter sense of the word, his neighbours, and, it may be, "his kinsmen according to the flesh," prompt him to employ his first and most strenuous endeavours to awaken the attention of those amongst whom he lives, to the pure and simple doctrines of primitive Christianity, which they have so generally forsaken, and to provide and maintain the means of recommending to the attention of professed believers in Jesus, the faith from which they have apostatized, but which he is firmly persuaded is "the faith first delivered to the saints." And he is induced to devote his personal exertions, or to contribute of his substance, according as God hath prospered him, to the promoting of such measures, by reflecting that it is from a source which he sees to be exceedingly impure, that the streams of religious knowledge are now flowing, which are designed to refresh the heathen world; streams which cannot be more salubrious than the fountain itself, nor impart freshness, vigour, and luxuriance to that "tree of life, the leaves of which are for the

healing of the nations." Unitarians finding then much to be done at home, may well be excused for not having employed their comparatively scanty resources in extending their labours to distant lands. Once more,

Fourthly. It may be alleged, by way of apology, for conduct which is ascribed, as uncharitably as it is falsely, to want of piety or of benevolence, or of both, that it is neither unnatural or inexcusable, if Unitarians have been restrained from engaging in foreign missions, by the certain expectation of vehement and unceasing opposition from those who might be labouring in the same field. A missionary in a foreign land, engages, even under the most favourable auspices, in an undertaking of extreme difficulty and danger: an undertaking which requires every day and every hour, the spirit of a martyr: an undertaking which cannot be carried on without the willing sacrifice of personal ease and comfort; without much patient endurance of opposition and of insult, if not of actual persecution and suffering; without a meek submission to all the mortifying effects of prejudice, passion, ignorance, and perverseness; without a temper that can patiently sustain the repeated failure of long-matured schemes, and the frequent disappointment of flattering hopes, a mind elevated far above all mere earthly objects, a heart immoveably fixed on the attainment of the great

end of his labours, and an eye steadily directed to the crown which the righteous Judge hath promised to bestow on those who "finish their course, having kept the faith." Such are the demands which are made upon every Christian missionary; but the Unitarian missionary would be called to additional trials. His fortitude would be exercised, not only by "perils in the city, and perils in the wilderness," but also by "perils amongst false brethren." His patience would be proved, not only by "perils by the Heathen," but by "perils by his own countrymen." They who now reproach us as deficient in zeal, if we should grow zealous, would brand our zeal as unholy and polluting. They who now blame us for our indifference, if we should rouse ourselves into action, would, to the utmost of their power, oppose and thwart us in all our measures. They who are now most forward in challenging us to produce from among converted Heathens the fruits of our toil in the field of the Gospel, would be the first and most strenuous to render all our toil painful and unavailing. They would strew with thorns the rugged path they seem to invite us to tread; they would sow with salt the ground we should be preparing to cultivate; they would lay waste the harvest which might promise to reward our labour. They would leave no means untried to excite in the mind of the untutored Heathen, suspicion and prejudice; and they might, perhaps, encourage them, rather than

listen to our voice, even like the men of Ephesus in the apostles' days tumultuously to extol the objects of their idolatrous worship.* This may seem a harsh and uncandid remark, and it is not without reluctance that I make it; but it appears to me fully justified, by numberless occurrences amongst ourselves, which shew how bitter a spirit our orthodox brethren indulge and encourage against us; and also, which is yet more to my present purpose, by the answer which has been returned by the Unitarian missionary in India, to whom I have already referred, to the following question proposed to him: "How," asks his correspondent, "are Unitarians in the East regarded and treated by other Christians? Is it with any peculiar hostility?" To which he replies. "Dissenters do not admit Unitarian Christians to their communion; but religious differences, except in a very few cases, have happily not affected the ordinary intercourse of society. I have observed, however, that an idolatrous native is regarded by the reputed orthodox with more complacency than a Unitarian Hindoo; and a European who is alike indifferent to all religions, is considered a better and a more hopeful subject than one who professes to be a Unitarian Christian. It would be invidious to enumerate the various proofs which I have had, in my own experience, of an intolerant, exclusive,

* See Acts xix. 34.

and slanderous spirit."* It is indeed well known that no sooner had this able and conscientious missionary avowed himself a Unitarian, and opened a place for Unitarian worship, than the late bishop of Calcutta determined to send him out of the country. The design was happily opposed and frustrated by the attorney-general of Bengal, who was professionally consulted on the occasion; and who thus manifested a fuller knowledge, either of the spirit of the times, or of the spirit of the Gospel, than the intolerant prelate.—No one, then, can be surprised, or justly regard us as deserving of censure, if we have felt somewhat reluctant to engage in labours, to which we did not think ourselves peculiarly called by the providence of God; from which we had no ground to expect much valuable fruit; which we clearly foresaw must be undertaken amongst such discouragements, and counteracted by such determined and universal opposition.

But the state of things has been recently changing, and a door is now opened to us by the Lord himself, which will, in the end, I trust, be "a great door and effectual," though many and bitter adversaries may attempt to shut it against us. There

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* *Correspondence, &c. p.* 61, 62.

"With respect both to the Europeans and natives," Mr. Adam observes, "the time is so short since Unitarian Christianity has been professed in Calcutta, the resources of its friends have been so limited, and *the odium excited against them has been so great*, that few persons have had the subject fairly and fully presented to their attention."—*Ib.*

standeth a man of India who beseecheth us, saying, 'Come over and help us;' and this entreaty is addressed to us in such circumstances, that we may assuredly gather that the Lord hath now called us to pursue such measures as may supply those of India with more effectual means than they have yet enjoyed, of hearing the pure and uncorrupted Gospel of Christ preached to them.

Few who pay any attention to the state of religion in the world, and especially to the progress of Unitarianism, can be strangers to the name of Rammohun Roy. This excellent person, who has been known, for some years, in England as well as in India, as a learned and zealous Hindoo reformer, is a native of Bengal and an opulent Brahmun. Having, in early life, beheld with disapprobation and horror, the impious, idolatrous, and barbarous rites practised by his countrymen, he wrote a work "Against the idolatry of all religions," which gave great offence, not only to the Hindoos, but also to the Mahommedans, and created him many enemies.* Engaging more deeply in the

* In vindicating the author of "The Precepts of Jesus, &c." before he had acknowledged the work to be his own, from the illiberal aspersions cast upon him by the Editor of 'The Friend of India,' he thus speaks of himself: "Although born a Brahmun, he not only renounced idolatry at a very early period of his life, but published, at that time, a treatise in Arabic and Persian, against that system; and no sooner acquired a tolerable knowledge of English, than he made his desertion of idol worship known to the Christian world by his English publication;—a renunciation that, I am sorry to say, brought severe difficul-

study of the Sacred Writings of the Hindoos, he became fully convinced that the notions which were prevalent amongst his countrymen, respecting the multiplicity of their deities, (who are reckoned to amount to no less than 330,000,000,) and the inhuman and licentious customs connected with the worship paid to them, were grounded upon an utter ignorance, or a gross perversion of their religion.* These Writings appeared to him to teach the doctrine of the existence of one God alone, the eternal and incomprehensible Creator, and the benevolent and omnipotent Ruler of all things; and to require from the professors of Hindoism, a mental, rather than a corporeal worship, accompanied by strict and exemplary virtue. Entertaining these enlightened views of the religion of his country, he became anxious to reform the popular creed, and to bring the disgraceful and demoralizing practices which it encouraged, into general disrepute; and for this purpose, he published the translation of an ancient digest of the Hindoo Scriptures, and also an

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ties upon him, by exciting the displeasure of his parents, and subjecting him to the dislike of his near, as well as distant relations, and to the hatred of nearly all his countrymen for several years." See *The Precepts of Jesus, &c. p.* 104. *Eng. ed.* See also a very interesting account of this eminent Hindoo reformer in the *Monthly Repository, vol.* XV. *p.* 1, *&c.*

* See Preface to *The Precepts of Jesus*, Lond. by Dr. Thomas Rees; and the Introduction to *A Letter by W. Roberts, &c.* by the Rev T. Belsham, from which publications chiefly, this brief account of Rammohun Roy is taken.

abridgement of it, in order to prove "that the superstitious practices which deform the Hindoo religion, have nothing to do with the pure spirit of its dictates." In the Preface to this work, he observes, "My constant reflections on the inconvenient or rather injurious rites, introduced by the peculiar practice of Hindoo idolatry, which, more than any other Pagan worship, destroys the texture of society; together with compassion for my countrymen, have compelled me to use every possible effort to awaken them from their dream of error; and by making them acquainted with the Scriptures, enable them to contemplate, with true devotion, the unity and omnipresence of nature's God. By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahmun, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches even of some of my relations, whose prejudices were strong, and whose temporal advantages depend upon the present system. But these, however accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive, when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice—perhaps acknowledged with gratitude; at any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation; my motives are acceptable to that Being, who beholds in secret, and compensates openly." * Happily, his

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* See *Translation of an Abridgement of the Vedant, or Resolution of all the Veds; the most celebrated and revered work of Brahmunical*

confidence has not been altogether disappointed. He has reaped some valuable fruits of his labour of piety and benevolence. By himself we are informed, that "many respectable persons among his countrymen, to the great disappointment of their spiritual guides, have risen superior to their original prejudices; and that the great body of them, possessed of good understandings, and not much fettered with prejudices, being perfectly satisfied of the truth of the doctrines contained in the works he has laid before them, and of the gross errors of the puerile system of idol worship which they were led to follow, have altered their religious conduct in a manner becoming the dignity of human beings."* And from another quarter we learn, that the most intelligent and enlightened portion of the native population of Calcutta have become Unitarian Hindoos or worshippers of one God, having derived their present views of religion from the works published by this learned Brahmun.†

Such a man, it was reasonably thought, could "not be far from the kingdom of God;" though

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theology, establishing the unity of the Supreme Being, and that he alone is the object of propitiation and worship. By Rammohun Roy." Calcutta, 1816. Lond. 1817.

This was followed by various other Tracts written with the same design. For a review of some of which, see *Monthly Repository, vol.* XIV. *pp.* 561, *&c.*

* See *Preface to the Precepts of Jesus, &c. p.* xii.

† See *Correspondence, &c. p.* 88.

it was doubted by some whether he would ever advance so far as to enter it. He had told a clergyman at Calcutta, that he preferred Christianity to all other religions; and would certainly embrace it if it were not for the doctrine of the Trinity; which appeared to him quite as objectionable as the Polytheism of the Hindoos. But to a mind like his, unshackled by prejudice, open to conviction, and eager in the pursuit of truth, such an obstacle could not long remain insurmountable. Having acquired a knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek languages, he sat down to the careful perusal of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, and the result was, as might be expected, a firm conviction that the doctine of the Trinity was not taught in them, and that the religion of Christ is of divine origin. Having arrived at these important conclusions, it became his first care to place before his countrymen, in a work consisting of large extracts from the first three Gospels, and entitled 'The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Peace and Happiness,' such a view of Christianity as might recommend it to their serious attention, and prepare the way for the diffusion of Christian truth. "Unexpectedly," as he informs us, "he met with opposition from those whom he considered the last persons likely to oppose him on this subject."* He judged of the temper of those who call themselves Christians, by what he

* *Precepts of Jesus, &c. p.* 120.

had read of the temper of their common Lord; and had not yet discovered how widely the spirit of orthodoxy differs from the spirit of Christ. The general character of this work, and some remarks which occur in the Preface, happily drew forth the animadversions of the learned Baptist Missionaries at Calcutta, the result of which has been 'Three Appeals to the Christian Public, in defence of The Precepts of Jesus'; which in soundness of criticism, force of reasoning, and mildness of temper, have seldom been surpassed or equalled; * which prove the author to be far better "instructed to the kingdom of God," than those who calumniate him as a Heathen, and who have been set apart for the defence and propagation of the Gospel; and which will long remain a powerful aid to those who may be called to preach the pure doctrine of Christ on the shores of the Ganges. Though for such reasons as induced Paul to "become all things to all men, that he might

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* These Appeals contain," as it has been most truly remarked by Dr. Ware, "discussions of the most important subjects of Christian theology, and interpretations of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures, from the pen of a native Indian, bearing such marks of clear and enlightened views, and of extensive and accurate learning, as would do honour to the best educated divine."—*Correspondence, &c. p.* 122.

The Rev. Mr. Mill has chosen to pass a very different judgement upon the first of these Appeals; "This treatise," he observes, "certainly not entirely his own, and if report speaks truly, dictated by one who had separated from the Baptists, and has since opened a Unitarian meeting house at Calcutta, is conspicuous for nothing so much as the presumptuous vanity of its nominal author; its affectation of Western learning, and attempts at Greek and Hebrew criticisms, are, to the

win some," he has not relinquished caste, by submitting to baptism, he avows himself a believer in Christ; he worships in a Christian church, * and is almost the exclusive and the generous patron of a Christian Unitarian Missionary.

It is that Missionary, by whom we are more immediately and earnestly besought, to go over and help them. Perhaps I need not to observe, that I allude to the Rev. W. Adam, who was sent to India as a missionary, under the patronage of the Baptist Society, in the year 1817, and since then, has resided chiefly at Calcutta. The difficulties he experienced in his labours amongst the natives, as he himself informs us, † on the subject of the Trinity, gradually, though slowly matured into a conviction, that the doctrine was contrary both to Scripture and reason; and this conviction compelled him, about three years ago, to an open renun-

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last degree, contemptible; and what there is in it to deserve notice, is borrowed from the long-confuted supporters of the same impiety in England." *Missionary Register for* 1823, *p.* 401.

That this Treatise is not the genuine production of the learned Brahmun, who is avowedly the author, will require better proof than mere report or bare assertion; and as to its merits, the opinion of the venerable Theological Professor of Harvard, will, if I am not greatly mistaken, be approved by all impartial and competent readers; while the judgement of the Rev. Principal of Bishops' College, will be attributed to the irritation of prejudice and bigotry, under which he manifestly labours.

* *Christian Examiner for July and August, p.* 317.

† *Unitarian Fund Register, No.* 1. *p.* 1.—*Monthly Repository, for* 1823.

ciation of it, and to the profession of Unitarianism. Testimonies to the excellence of his character have been given, not only by those "who have been acquainted with him during his residence in India, but by his former religious connexions," who have no other charge to allege against him, than that he has departed from what they choose to call the truth. And that illustrious native, of whom I have just largely spoken, and to whom, in part at least, under God, he owes the better knowledge of the Christian doctrine which he now possesses, describes him as one "whose thorough acquaintance with the language, manners, and prejudices of the natives, renders him well qualified to co-operate with every prospect of success, with those who may be sent out to spread knowledge among the native community." * Here, then, as the Secretary to the Unitarian Fund justly remarks, in the Circular Letter which has been the immediate occasion of my

* See *Correspondence, &c. p.* 134.

In another place he thus speaks of Mr. Adam. "Notwithstanding the many disadvantages under which he has been labouring, he has brought this system of Christianity (Unitarianism) into notice in this part of the globe; as previous to that period, (1821,) many did not know that there was such a thing as Unitarianism, and others tried to stigmatise it, in proportion as their prejudices for the corruption of Christianity prompted them to abuse reason and common sense, without fear of contradiction. Mr. A. although he has made no avowed native convert, has already received every countenance from several respectable European gentlemen, and from a great number of the reading part of the native community in Calcutta."—*Correspondence, &c. p.* 131.

A writer in the Baltimore Unitarian Miscellany, for June, 1822,

calling your attention to this subject at the present time, "What there appeared no prospect of accomplishing by our own resources, Providence has done for us." It has raised up, in the highest caste of the natives of India, "an able, pious, and temperate advocate of the truth as it is in Jesus; whose conversion to Unitarian Christianity cannot fail to make a powerful impression upon the minds both

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cited in the *Monthly Repository, Vol. XVII. p.* 756, observes, speaking of a sermon preached by Mr. Adam to a Unitarian congregation in Calcutta, "When in Calcutta, it was my good fortune to enjoy an intimate intercourse with the author. He was sent to India as a Baptist missionary, by the Society in London, and had, subsequently to his arrival, proved himself to be judicious, well-informed, and pious. About six months prior to my departure, he engaged with Rammohun Roy, as an instructer in the Greek and Latin languages; but being, at the same time, employed with him and another gentleman of the same mission, in preparing a Translation of the New Testament into the Bengalee, the subject of his conversation with Rammohun Roy alone, was most frequently one which had been suggested or discussed at other meetings.

"In consequence of these conversations, the instructer was led to doubt, to examine, and, at length, to renounce his previous opinions; and on the occasion above-named, he made his first public confession of the change which had taken place in his belief.

"It would give me pleasure to be able to state, that this difference of opinion had not affected his standing in the good opinion of his brethren of the mission and the public; but in this, as in almost every other instance, a difference in religious opinion has succeeded in destroying Christian charity.

"A letter from a friend, himself a missionary and a Trinitarian, speaks in the highest terms of Mr. Adam; acknowledging that, in his view, he appears to be as pious and as sincere as at any former period of their acquaintance."

of natives and European residents," and whose controversial writings, together with the attacks made upon the Trinity and other pretended doctrines of Christianity, by Brahmunical writers, are preparing the way for the more extensive diffusion of the Gospel in the East; and when "the growing intelligence of the native population of India, aided by the establishment of schools and the enjoyment of a free press, seemed to promise that the preaching of Unitarian Christianity, by an European, (for the Hindoos attach great importance, even in matters of opinion, to European patronage,) would attract considerable attention from all classes," Providence has guided into the way of truth, one who is as well qualified as he is anxious, to shew that way to others, and to "be instrumental (I use his own words) in making known to his fellow-creatures, and especially to the Heathen, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God." To Unitarians of England and America, but especially to ourselves, who "as Englishmen enjoy superior advantages to American Unitarians," he looks for such assistance as may enable him to accomplish this important and benevolent design: and he assures us, that "if Unitarian Christianity is to prevail in that country," (and who can doubt that such a blessing is in the counsels of infinite wisdom and goodness?) "the efforts necessary for this purpose must, for a considerable period at least, owe their chief energy to the aid derived from the professors of that

faith in the other quarters of the globe." * With respect to the nature of the aid he seeks from us, he has briefly summed it up in two words, "*men* and *money*." He "pledges himself to the Unitarian public in England, that if they will send out missionaries to India, and adequately support them in their labours, fruit shall not be wanting." † But though he encourages us to hope that "the harvest would be plenteous, the labourers are few" indeed, whom we can employ; and we can only "pray the Lord of the harvest, that he will send labourers into his harvest." *Money* we can supply; to such an extent at least, as may encourage this solitary but zealous preacher in the prosecution of his arduous work; and enable him to execute the plans which are essentially necessary to ensure the future progress of the Gospel in those regions. I am persuaded we shall cheerfully contribute, according to our ability, when we consider the objects for which, chiefly, funds are required.

"First. For the erection of a Unitarian chapel in Calcutta, and for the support of Unitarian worship and preaching in the English language." Towards the former of these, nearly 12,000 rupees (about £11,00) have been already subscribed by the friends of Unitarians in that country, but it is not ex-

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* *Correspondence, &c. p.* 90.

† *Unitarian Fund Register, No.* 1. *p.* 21.—*Monthly Rep. Vol. XVIII.*

pected that either of them can be accomplished without foreign aid. The estimated expense of the chapel alone is 30,000 rupees; but on account of the increased and increasing value of landed property, it is not improbable that 40,000 (about £4000) may be ultimately required.* Assistance, therefore, is anxiously expected from the Unitarians of this country; and "that assistance, to be efficient, must be promptly and liberally rendered."† For, Mr. Adam assures us, that "until he and his friends in Calcutta realize sufficient subscriptions for the purchase of ground, and the erection of the chapel, they may be considered as almost at a stand. The attendance on our worship," he observes, "has fallen off, nor do I expect that we can do any thing with effect in this way, till the chapel is built. The habits and whole structure of society here, forbid such an expectation. But when we shall have a regular place of worship, I am confident of receiving the most decided support from gentlemen of the first respectability and character."‡

"Secondly. The Anglo-Hindoo school, now principally supported by Rammohun Roy, and in which sixty Hindoo children are daily instructed

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* *Correspondence, &c. p.* 92.—This has appeared to many, a large sum; but it is probably not larger than the high price of land in Calcutta, and the usual style of building renders absolutely necessary.

† *Circular Letter.* ‡ *Unitarian Fund Register, ubi sup.*

in the English language, and in the rudiments of general knowledge, might be placed on a more permanent basis, and rendered a more useful institution, by the purchase of an eligible spot of ground, and the erection of a commodious school-room, by the employment of more able teachers, and by increasing the number of pupils. All this cannot be accomplished without more ample resources than are at present possessed."

"Thirdly. Funds are required to defray the expense attending the preparation and printing of such works in English, in Sanskrit and Bengallee, and in Persian and Hindoosthanee, as the particular circumstances of the European, the Hindoo, and the Mussulman communities, many seem to require." * When these important objects are considered, the Unitarian Fund Committee, will be justified in observing as they do in their Circular Letter, "that the magnitude and interest of the present case are such, as seem to them to warrant the hope of its receiving considerable aid from the individual donations of those who are solicitous for the diffusion of unadulterated Christianity."

Shall I now be asked, 'What motives can be proposed, what encouragements suggested, to induce us to engage in labours which have hitherto proved so fruitless?' Will it be said, 'India has long been the scene of zealous missionary exertions, and yet

* *Correspondence, &c. ubi sup.*

the great mass of the population is still involved in the thickest darkness, as to religious truth and practice? To a great extent, indeed, this must be allowed.* But can we discern no causes of the failure of those who have preceded us? Can we gain no instruction from their experience? Have not their attempts been premature? The great Jewish lawgiver himself, in vain endeavoured to free his countrymen from their hard bondage in Egypt, because he anticipated the period which God had appointed; and Jesus and his apostles would have preached the glad tidings of the kingdom to no purpose, before "the fulness of time had come." Can we perceive nothing in the nature of the doctrine which our orthodox brethren have carried with them; in the prejudices, the customs, and the habits of those to whom they delivered it, or in the measures which have been adopted to make it known, which may satisfactorily account for their ill-success, afford us some reasonable ground of hope, and suggest to us some valuable counsel? They who undertake to bring the natives of India, to the knowledge and practice of Christianity, must be content to "cast their bread upon the waters," and how wisely

* "The population of Hindoostan amounts, it is supposed, to not less than *one hundred and fifty millions*, of whom more than *sixty millions* are British subjects. With the exception of *a few Heathen*, but recently converted to Christianity, all those are 'lying in wickedness,' and destitute of Christian teachers."—*Missionary Register*, *for* 1820, *p.* 263.

soever they proceed, must not expect to find it till "after many days." The extravagant notions which the Hindoos entertain of the antiquity of their nation and their religion, which lead them to despise Christianity as an institution of yesterday; their reliance on the sanctity of the books received amongst them, as revealed authorities, and the variety of prejudices implanted in their minds in early life; * the long-cherished power of superstition, and the influence which, through it, their priests are enabled to exert over them; the demoralizing character of the popular idolatry, and its intimate connexion with all the relations and habits of life; and above all, the institution of the *caste*, which is not only recognized by the judicial code of the Hindoos, but forms an essential part of their religious system; which is a bar to all improvement, but which no one can relinquish, without losing his property, falling into universal contempt, and renouncing his nearest kindred, and his dearest friends; these are formidable obstacles which lie in the way of all who would diffuse the knowledge of the Gospel in Hindoostan, and cannot be easily or speedily removed. But our reputedly orthodox brethren create to themselves, especially among the better instructed and more enlightened classes of the natives of India, an insuperable difficulty, by the representations they

* *Correspondence, &c. p.* 132.

give of the Christian system. Against their views of the character of God, of the person of Christ, of the efficacy of his death, of the design of the Gospel, and of the mode of its operation, the inquisitive and intelligent have revolted, and will continue to revolt.* As Rammohun Roy, himself a Hindoo, and consequently, knowing well the heart of that people, has observed, "The doctrines which the missionaries maintain and preach, are less comformable to reason than those professed by Mussulmans, and in several points, are equally absurd with the popular Hindoo creed. Hence, there is no rational inducement for either of these tribes to lay aside their respective doctrines, and to adopt those held by the generality of Christians." † Mr. Adam, also, whose experience both as a Trinitarian and a Unitarian preacher, enables him to speak with confidence, and ought to give great weight to his testimony, informs us, that "The kind of efficacy attributed to the death of Christ, appears, to thinking natives, unreasonable; the limited extent of that efficacy offensive, and the language in which it is commonly described even disgusting. ‡ The harsh representations given

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* *Correspondence, &c. p. 62.* † *Correspondence, &c.*

‡ "The missionaries uniformly speak of the death of Christ as a real and actual satisfaction made to God for the sins of men. I have had opportunity of observing the manner in which this doctrine strikes the minds of the natives, who probably never before had heard it stated. 'If,' replied a learned Brahmun to a missionary, who had been attempting to recommend this doctrine to his attention, 'if the

of the character of God, as pardoning the sins of those only who believe in the atoning death of Christ, and as consigning to endless punishment, because they do not believe in him, millions who have never even heard his name, creates great and just offence.* The incarnation of the Deity, an idea familiar to the native mind, as the doctrine so closely resembles their own, leads them to sup-

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death of Christ can alone satisfy the justice of God and atone for the sins of men, then during all the ages of the world preceding his death, the justice of God remained unsatisfied, and the sins of men unatoned, and consequently, unpardoned.' The missionary endeavoured to obviate this objection by stating, that to the divine mind the future was as well known as the past, and that, therefore, the sins of penitent believers, even in the earliest ages, were pardoned on the ground of that great sacrifice which was, in the fulness of time, to be offered up. 'That is,' coolly replied the Pundit, as if acquiescing in the representation which had been given, 'the death of Christ procured the pardon of sin before Christ died. The cause came after the effect. The effect existed before the cause.' Here the conversation dropped."—*Correspondence, &c. p.* 70.

* "A missionary was, on one occasion, dwelling with much earnestness on the death of Christ as the only atonement for sin, and on a personal faith in him as the only means of enjoying its benefits, when he was interrupted by one of his native hearers, who with equal earnestness inquired, 'What, then, becomes of all our ancestors, who never enjoyed the means of being acquainted with this way of salvation? are they lost for ever?' The missionary rather avoiding the difficulty than removing it, replied, 'That whatever might become of them, the inquirer's chief concern should be about his own salvation.' The veil thus attempted to be thrown over one of the most repulsive features of Calvinism, was too thin to conceal its deformity, and the native at once penetrating into the spirit of the missionary's religious system, turned away, without deigning a single word in reply."—*Correspondence, &c.*

pose a resemblance between Christianity and Hindooism, and they are thus confirmed in their ancient superstitions; this, together with the doctrine of the Trinity, will prove an insuperable obstacle to the propagation of the Gospel in India. It is to these doctrines that Mussulmans constantly recur, in their reasonings against Christianity; and it is upon these that Unitarian Hindoos, or those who have relinquished idolatry on the authority of the Veds, have hitherto grounded all their objections.* The truth is," he adds, "that however beneficial the general effect of the indirect labours of missionaries may have been, the direct labours upon the middling and higher classes have been decidedly injurious to the progress of Christianity." †

* "A missionary addressing a few Mussulman hearers, was endeavouring to impress upon their minds a conviction of the dignified character, and meritorious sufferings of Christ, when he was stopped by one of them who impatiently inquired, 'Is Jesus Christ God, or not?' To this the missionary with great deliberation and seriousness replied, 'He is God.' The Mussulman, to shew his contempt, immediately made a profound obeisance, and, without adding a word, left the place." *Correspondence, &c. p.* 80.

The Baptist missionaries, in the fifth Annual Report, complain that "the Hindoos annoy a missionary wherever they meet him, by speaking in the most obscene manner on the doctrine of the Trinity. Whatever may be the topic, they endeavour to put an end to it by introducing this subject. The questions they propose, produce a strong effect on the idolatrous auditory, who return to the worship of their 330 million of deities with fresh satisfaction, after they have heard the God of the Christians abused with all manner of vile aspersions."—*Correspondence, &c. p.* 82.

† *Correspondence, &c. pp.* 68—86.

It is obvious, therefore, that Unitarian missionaries would enter upon their labours in Hindoostan, with greater advantage, and pursue them with a more encouraging prospect of success, than those who have hitherto been employed there. It is the opinion of the illustrious native, to whom I have often referred, that while the conversion of the enlightened natives to Christianity, in the form of Trinitarianism, is morally impossible, these would not scruple to embrace, or at least to encourage, the Unitarian system of Christianity, were it inculcated upon them in an intelligible manner.* And Mr. Adam, in replying to the following question proposed by Dr. Ware, "Are there any reasons for believing that Christianity, as it is held by Unitarians, would be more readily received by intelligent Hindoos, than as it is held by Trinitarians?" expresses a similar sentiment. He observes, that it is certain that the Mussulmans in India, who form about one-fifth of the population, and probably Hindoos, through their influence, would be more likely to embrace Unitarian than Trinitarian Christianity; that the extensive cultivation of Mahommedan literature in Hindoostan diminishes the attachment of Hindoos to idolatry, and excites a pre-disposition in favour of Unitarianism generally; and consequently, when it shall become known to them, in favour of Christianity as it is

* *Correspondence, &c. p.* 133.

held by Unitarians. He states it as an important fact, that conversions to Mahommedanism from amongst persons belonging to the middle class of Hindoo society, are not infrequent; and as those can be influenced only by a conviction of the superior reasonableness of their new, compared with their old religion, these conversions justify the expectation of success in propagating Unitarian Christianity, in proportion as the religion of Christ is superior to the religion of Mahommed in reasonableness and excellence. He further observes, that, besides Mussulmans, there are various other sects in India that acknowledge the simple Unity of God; and though they still retain many superstitions, their acknowledgement of the divine Unity would seem to pave the way for the labours of Unitarian missionaries, and to render the attainment of their great object more probable and easy. He adds, that Unitarian Hindoos form the most intelligent and enlightened portion of the native population of Calcutta; who have derived their present views of religion from those portions of the Ved which have been translated and published by Rammohun Roy, and from the numerous pieces which he has written in his own defence against his native opponents; and as the decided bias, which, in his controversy with Dr. Marshman, he has shewn in favour of Unitarian Christianity, and the encouragement he has given to its propagation, are known to most of them, and have not lessened the

influence which he possessed, or the respect which they entertained for him, it is fair to suppose, that in as far as they have attended to Christianity, they agree with him in his sentiments respecting it. And he assures us that, in proportion to his acquaintance with the increasing class of the native community, this view of their favourable disposition towards Unitarian Christianity has been confirmed. He warns us not to expect that the conversion of Hindoos to Christianity will be an easy matter, or advance by any other than a slow and gradual progress. Yet he is confident that if Unitarian missionaries were sent into India, duly qualified and adequately supported, not ambitious to exhibit the effect of their exertions in the number of those who may be engaged to call themselves Unitarian Christians, but to adopt and pursue such plans as may afford opportunities of exhibiting in word and in deed, the benign and liberal spirit of the Gospel; of exciting the attention of the well-educated natives to the evidence of the divine origin of Christianity; and of promoting temperate and friendly discussion on every subject of morals and religion, their success would be suitable to the great cause in which they thus engaged.* Let them but seek to increase the quantity of correct information on every subject; to raise the standard of public morals, to

* See *Appendix*

correct the excesses, to refine and elevate the tone of public feeling in religion, and to pour, in well-chosen portions, amongst the various classes and descriptions of men, the light of truth, and as sure as light and darkness cannot long subsist together, so sure will be the progress of Christianity in India.* "An attempt," he elsewhere observes, "has scarcely been made to exhibit the peculiar evidences of Christianity; and its doctrines have been hitherto preached in a manner so imperfect, in shades so dark, or in colouring so false, that only a very peculiar concurrence of pre-disposing circumstances, could have led a sincere inquirer to embrace it. When, however, the spread of a liberal system of education, and the increase of rational preaching and writing on the subject, shall have made the respectable and enlightened natives better acquainted with its true character and design, we may then, I think, expect an ample accession of such Hindoo converts to the Christian church. The very gradual and almost silent progress of Unitarianism for many years, in the New England States of America, followed by the unexpected public profession of its doctrines within a late period, by numerous individuals and congregations, affords an illustration of the mode in which it appears probable that Christianity will work its way in this country, and attain at last 'a local habitation and a name' amongst

* *Correspondence, &c. pp.* 86—95.

its inhabitants. Hindoos are not, upon the whole, more opposed to Unitarian Christianity, than were the original settlers in Massachusetts."*

These, my friends, are words of encouragement; and while they cannot but lead us to regret that our circumstances are not such as "to allow us to send chosen men" to this able missionary, willing like himself, and in company with him, "to hazard their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," they will, I have no doubt, excite us to do all in our power to strengthen his hands, to cheer him in his arduous labours, to support him amidst the opposition, which he must inevitably encounter, and to enable him to execute the plans on the success of which the future extensive diffusion of uncorrupted Christianity in Hindoostan must greatly depend. We shall, I trust, feel it our duty speedily to adopt such measures, as may enable us, at no very distant period, to afford to those who are calling upon us to go over and help them, more extensive and more efficient aid: in the mean time, we cannot do less than liberally contribute of our abundance, whatever may be necessary to "give respectability and permanency to the cause" of pure and undefiled religion in Calcutta, and to enable those who now profess it there, to take such steps as may render that great and populous city "a missionary station, from which religious truth may be disseminated in

* *Correspondence, &c. pp.* 102—104.

various directions, through the whole extent of British India." It may be long, indeed, before any missionaries shall proceed thence, to convey the glad tidings of the Gospel to the distant parts of the Peninsula; and even in Calcutta itself, the little leaven of Christian truth may long lie hidden, before the mass of the population is leavened; yet of the final result of the measures we are now called upon to support and encourage, no one, who believes Unitarianism to be "a doctrine according to godliness," can allow himself to doubt. And, if for the present, we can do no more than enable the zealous and able missionary, who now implores our aid, to extend the benefit of education amongst the natives of Hindoostan, to print and circulate well-written Tracts on the evidence, the doctrines, and the duties of Christianity, and to appear publicly, and according to the sentiments and the habits which prevail in the East, respectably, as a preacher of the Gospel, we shall do much to promote the final triumph of Christian truth. A Unitarian church in the capital of British India, though composed only of Europeans, "holding forth the word of life," and in obedience to that word, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, and, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining as lights in the world," cannot fail to shed a benign influence on the minds of serious natives; who "seeing their good works," the genuine

fruit of a pure Christian faith, will "glorify their Father who is in heaven," and own and reverence his beloved Son." *

And now, my friends, I have put the case fully and fairly before you, and I cheerfully leave you to

* Calcutta is not the first or the only place in India in which Unitarian Christianity has been professed and taught; and in recommending the cause of religious truth in that country, to the liberality of its friends in England, it is impossible not to remember, and it would be unjust not to record, the zealous, disinterested, and not altogether fruitless exertions of William Roberts, a native of the coast of Malabar. His short but eventful history is most affectingly detailed in his Letter addressed to the London Unitarian Society in the year 1816, and printed by that Society, with a very interesting preface, by the Rev. T. Belsham. And in his subsequent correspondence with Mr. Belsham, Dr. T. Rees, and Mr. Fox, by a modest detail of his extraordinary labours, by a calm and dispassionate representation of the opposition and difficulties with which he has to contend, by the evidence he affords of a rational and unaffected piety, of a sober judgement, and an enlightened zeal, he has urged the most powerful and irresistible claims to the patronage and assistance of all who desire the diffusion of the uncorrupted Gospel of our Lord. I am happy to learn from the Circular Letter that "by the liberality of the Unitarians of this country, he is now enabled to devote himself wholly to that good cause in which he is so deeply interested, and the church (at Madras) under his care, together with the schools so usefully connected with it, are in a prosperous condition."—He is yet, however, in need of more extensive aid to enable him to execute all the purposes he has so judiciously formed, and to provide for the permanency of the institutions which he has so happily established. It appears to be very desirable that his Letters should be collected into one Tract, and circulated as widely as possible among the Unitarians in England and North America. The state of Unitarianism at Madras, and the history and character of its first preacher there, require only to be more generally known than I am apprehensive they now are, to excite the sympathy, and to call forth the liberal assistance of all the friends of pure and undefiled religion.

determine what duty demands of you; persuaded that you will determine wisely and act conscientiously. I would hold out no fallacious hopes; I would not deceive you by promises of speedy and brilliant success, attending even the best directed and the most strenuous exertions. The fruits of any labours of this kind, undertaken in that part of the globe, our eyes cannot expect to behold. The fields there, are very partially, if at all "white already to harvest." The seed is yet but sparingly sown. But, as in respect of the blessings of the Gospel, "we have reaped that on which we bestowed no labour; other men laboured, and we have entered into their labours;" it is but right that we should do our part to prepare the field for those who are to succeed us; and this we may do, in the full persuasion, that hereafter, "they who sow and and they who reap, shall rejoice together." The kingdom of God is still like a grain of mustard-seed. If the seed be not sown, it will not vegetate; but if it be committed to the earth, though it rise not up immediately, it will, in due course, be quickened, and become a great tree, and all the fowls of heaven shall securely lodge in its branches. The progress of the conversion of the great native population of India, from a debasing idolatry to pure Christianity, must necessarily be slow and gradual; for a long time, it may scarcely be perceptible; but if no beginning be made, I need not say, this most desirable work can never be accom-

plished. The questions for us to decide are these; Is Unitarianism the genuine doctrine of Christ and his apostles? Is it that form of Christianity, which reason and experience would lead us to expect to be more readily and cordially embraced than any other, in which Christianity is too commonly represented? Are the circumstances which have recently taken place in Hindoostan, and particularly in Calcutta, such as a pious man, may, without exposing himself to the charge of enthusiasm, regard as the call of Providence upon those who profess Unitarianism to let their truly glad tidings be heard in that interesting country? If we neglect the opportunity now presented to us, can we reasonably hope that one so fair and promising will at any other time arise? If we seize not this occasion of diffusing the uncorrupted Gospel of our Lord, shall we not justify the suspicions of those who call in question our zeal in the cause of truth? Shall we not merit the reproaches of which we now complain? Shall we not incur the more fearful condemnation of Him who maketh us stewards of his manifold mercies, that we may dispense them to such of our brethren as are in need? By the answer which we cannot fail to return to these questions, we shall be admonished respecting our duty. In the discharge of that duty, let not any uncertainty as to the result, cause us to waver or grow remiss. It is our part to use the means with which God furnishes us; it is not our part to com-

mand or to hasten success. God reserves that to himself. The Gospel of Jesus, came from God; it is his cause; and with him we may confidently leave its interests. As he designed it to be a universal blessing, he cannot be regardless of its eventually general diffusion: as all wisdom, as well as all power, is his, he knows best by what means, and at what time, that diffusion shall be accomplished: as he is perfectly pure and holy, he cannot view with indifference any sincere and well-meant efforts to extend the most effectual means of holiness and virtue to all his rational and accountable creatures; and as he is impartially just and immutably good, he will not suffer any labour of love and mercy to go without its adequate reward. Let us, then, be willing and zealous "labourers together with God," and in that day, "when every man's work shall be made manifest," our labour will be found not to have been vain, and our recompense will be unspeakably glorious.

APPENDIX.

PAGE 18.

In the remarks which I have offered in vindication of Unitarians, it has been far from my desire to depreciate the zeal which most of the other sects of Christians have, of late years, manifested in the conversion of heathen nations. I honour the motives by which they appear to be influenced, who contribute to the support of foreign missions so largely and so cheerfully; * and I regard, as above all praise, the piety and benevolence of those who willingly forego all considerations of personal ease and comfort, and who "count not even their lives dear to them," so that they may promote the everlasting welfare of their ignorant and idolatrous brethren. It is much to be regretted that this zeal, has, in general, been so little, "according to knowledge;" and consequently, that the results bear so inadequate a proportion to the mighty apparatus which has been provided. For to say nothing of the erroneous doctrines which have been propagated for genuine Christianity, or of the false and injurious notions which the Heathen have been taught to form of what constitutes a truly Christian character, how very limited a progress has the Missionary Gospel been able to make; and how few are even the nominal converts, how insignificant the number of those who can give a reason for the hope in which they have been instructed, or afford perfect satisfaction and confidence to their indefatigable instructers! Orators and preachers at missionary meetings, without any intentions to deceive or mislead those who eagerly listen to them, too commonly represent the progress of the great work of heathen conversion, as it is to be seen by the eye of Faith alone; in accordance with their wishes and their hopes, rather than with reality. Their object is, to prevent discouragement, to excite

* Some idea may be formed of the extent of these contributions from the following statement: "The Missionary, Jews', and Bible Societies of the United Kingdom, and the American States, independently of similar bodies in other quarters, and of all Education and Tract Societies, receive, at present, sums which amount to upwards of ONE THOUSAND POUNDS PER DAY."—*Missionary Register for January* 1824, p. 1.

pleasing expectations, to stimulate and to justify continued exertion. But they who will be at the pains to look through some of the recent volumes of *The Missionary Register*, will form different, but unquestionably more correct views of the subject. They will find there, notwithstanding the natural desire of the missionaries to "magnify their office," to prove to their friends at home that their liberality is not unrewarded, and to encourage them to persevere in their work of benevolence, occasional complaints, lamentations, and acknowledgements, which betray the bitter disappointment they have experienced, a conviction of the inefficacy of their past labours, and an apprehension of a continued failure of the hopes they had so warmly cherished.

In no part of the heathen world, do the missionaries boast of their success, more than in some of the islands of Polynesia. "If any," say they, "are relaxing in missionary exertions, or are unbelievers in their importance, send them hither." And contrasting with the accounts formerly given by voyagers, of the moral character of some of these islanders, those transmitted to us by missionaries, and admitting them to be free from exaggeration, their success must be most gratefully acknowledged. But even in respect of these, we sometimes meet with expressions of doubt, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. In Otaheite itself, where "the profession of Christianity is universal," and the change which has taken place fills those by whose instrumentality it has been effected, with astonishment, much is owned to be "undoubtedly nothing but profession; and the desire of many to partake of divine ordinances, is feared to be more for the sake of distinction among their countrymen, than for Gospel privileges and spiritual blessings." *Missionary Register for* 1823, *p.* 69.—And of another island in Polynesia, it is said, "Were not idolatry an intolerably heavy burden, we should have distressing reason to fear, that, in spite of the light of revelation, which begins to shine here, and the efforts of Christians to establish the kingdom of Christ, a great portion of the people would return to their abominations."—*Ib. p.* 559.

The Wesleyan missionaries of *Western Africa*, observe; "The people appeared to listen with great attention to the things spoken; but alas! how little do they understand of the deep things of God, though we teach them as we teach children, and even become fools by preaching in that way which necessity dictates, that we may be wise to win

souls to Christ. But, after all, how much have we to lament! The extreme ignorance and the ridiculously absurd prejudices of Africans are beyond all conception."—*Missionary Register for* 1824, *p.* 5.—Better results cannot be expected, so long as attempts to introduce Christianity precede general instruction and civilization; and religion is made to consist of doctrines which the most cultivated minds cannot comprehend, and of warm and extatic feelings, rather than of an enlightened understanding, rational piety, and unostentatious, but universal virtue. If missionaries will not proceed as "wise master-builders;" if they will neither lay a good foundation, nor choose well the materials of the superstructure; if instead of "gold, silver, precious stones," they will build up "wood, hay, stubble," what wonder if "their work be burned, and they suffer loss?"

With respect to India, in every point of view, the most important field in which missionaries have laboured, the want of success is most striking and most lamentable. It would be absurd to imagine with the Abbé Dubois, that the Hindoos are not convertible; yet they who have undertaken to convert them, own that, hitherto, the undertaking has not prospered. They boast occasionally, indeed, of the thousands that grace the triumphs of the Gospel in the East; but when particular inquiries are instituted, these sink into a very insignificant number. "Visions of glory" float before the eyes of the missionaries; but the scene in which they toil is confessedly gloomy and discouraging.

The Baptist missionaries of *Calcutta*, speaking of the four places for native worship there, observe; "The missionaries meet, day after day, various and ever-fluctuating congregations, and have to encounter the same irksome round of frivolous excuses and objections a hundred times repeated, while, at the same time, their pity is roused by witnessing the complicated miseries of those who hasten after other gods.—Many inquirers, prompted by interest, and some by curiosity, have applied to the missionaries, but when it was found that the profession of the Gospel promised no temporal advantages, and that the truths which it reveals, though so important, were plain and simple, their anxiety to become acquainted with it ceased."—*Ib. p.* 41.

"The brethren" (viz. those sent by the London Missionary Society)

"continue every evening in the week, to preach to the natives in the *chief places of concourse*, either in the streets of Calcutta, or the public roads of its vicinity. The congregations which assemble on these occasions, apparently" (but not always, as is evident from other accounts) "listen with attention. Many, from time to time, have appeared deeply impressed with the force of truth; and some during the past year, have manifested very encouraging indications of real conversion to Christ. The brethren, however, lament that the natives too seldom exhibit a desirable spirit of inquiry, and still less frequently conduct their inquiries with calmness and candour. Seriously and painfully impressed with the little success which hath hitherto attended their labours among the Heathen, the brethren at this station have resolved to set apart one day in every month for self-examination, humiliation, and special prayer."—*Ib. p.* 43.

Another writes thus from *Digah*; "Our native brethren are active in going from house to house, in visiting places immediately around us, and in attending to the ordinary round of duty. They certainly claim our sympathy and our prayers. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, they are engaged, more or less, in conversing with their countrymen on the redemption to be found in Christ, without meeting with any who afford them joy here, and give them a hope that they will be their crown in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Ib. p.* 47.

The Church missionaries in *Tinnevelley*, observe; "Some of the native Christians have, during the year, given sufficient evidence of a change of mind, and have become greatly useful in the mission. Amongst the rest of our native Christian people, divine knowledge increases; but we wish to see them truly converted, and shew forth the power of that knowledge. We are grieved, at times, at the inconsistent behaviour of some of those whom we received during the year into our church."—*Ib. p.* 59.

A missionary sent out by the Church Missionary Society, writes thus; "Here is evidently, on the whole, a great work going on this country, and much is done by missions in India; but so far as I have had opportunity of seeing, I am constrained to say, that the bulwarks of Satan still stand amazingly fast and firm, and that an almighty power alone is

sufficient to shake them. Discouragements, trials, and disappointments attend on every side; and, indeed, if we were not enabled by the grace of God, to believe firmly in all his promises, we should sometimes not know what to say, or what to think of our work. Here we have to realize an Abrahamic faith, because we are not permitted to see much.

The indifference toward the salvation of their souls and religious concerns, which these Hindoos manifest, is incredible; and persons who have not lived among them, can hardly form any idea of it.—It is not uncommon, and I have heard it this very day, when we were riding through the town, that the people hiss at us, crying out in mockery, the name of our blessed Saviour."—*Ib.*

All this accords perfectly with the accounts given by Rammohun Roy and Mr. Adam, in answer to the inquiries proposed by Dr. Ware.

Mr. Adam, in one part of '*The Correspondence*,' observes: "As a general description, the native audiences may be said to be frequently tumultuous, and always even at the best, precarious and desultory." (p. 24.) And again; "I believe it will be found that those who have paid attention to the subject before leaving England or America, have the conviction, on their arrival in this country, that less is done towards the specified objects of missions, than from the published accounts, they had been led to suppose."—*Ib.*

Among the questions proposed by Dr. Ware, was the following; "Are they" (the converts) "Christians from inquiry and conviction, or from other motives?" The answers of his correspondents are highly important, and throw considerable light on the results of missionary labours in Hindoostan.—Rammohun Roy observes, "The real motives of our actions are very difficult to be discovered. All that I can say on this subject, is, that several years ago, there was a pretty prevalent report in this part of India that a native embracing Christianity should be remunerated for his loss of caste by a gift of 500 rupees, with a country-born Christian woman as his wife; and while this report had any pretensions to credit, several natives offered, from time to time, to become Christians. The hope of any such recompense being taken away, the old converts find now very few natives inclined to follow their example. This disappointment not only discourages further conversion, but has also induced several Mussulman converts to return to their former faith; and had Hindoos with equal facility admitted the return of an outcaste to their society, a great number of them also

would, I suspect, have imitated the conduct of their brother Mussulman converts. In a populous country like Hindoostan, there are thousands of distressed outcastes wandering about, in whom the smallest hope of worldly gain can produce an immediate change of religious profession, and their conversion to Christianity is a matter of indifference to the community at large. About two years ago, I stated these circumstances to a church missionary who lives in my neighbourhood, and whom I respect for his liberal conduct; and I even offered to send to that gentleman as many natives as he might wish to convert, on condition that he should maintain them at a fixed salary not exceeding eight rupees per month."—*Correspondence, &c. pp.* 129, 130.

Mr. Adam, in reply to the above question, remarks, that it is easier to determine what have not been their motives, than to perceive what have: but he thinks there is reason to fear that the motives of few have been good. "The numerous instances of immoral conduct which occur amongst them, and meet with the public censure of their teachers, shew that they did not expect that strictness of discipline to which they have been required to submit." Mr. Adam has known only one who was able to read their own sacred books; and that they may be very imperfectly acquainted with Christianity, is evident from the following curious fact. "Tarachund Dutt, a native convert residing at Vansvariya, in one of his publications on Christianity, compared the three persons of the Athanasian Trinity, to the three persons of the Hindoo Triad, and described the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as respectively, the Creator, the Preserver, and Destroyer of the world. This account of the Trinity is unorthodox; and yet the book containing it, was printed at the Serampore press, under the eyes of the missionaries, and the author of it, before his return to idolatry, was esteemed one of the most respectable and best informed of the native converts."—*Ib. p.* 54.

"Since I embraced Unitarianism, nine or ten of the native converts have visited me at different times, either individually or in companies of two, three, or four. They had received the idea that I was not a Unitarian Christian, but a Unitarian Hindoo; and they gave me to understand, some with more plainness than others, that if I would support them, and permit them to use my name, they would preach with all their might against the other missionaries. I, of course, gave them no encouragement; and when they found that my purpose was fixed, they discontinued their visits. They appear to have supposed

that I would be willing to adopt any means of hostility against those from whom, they stated, *they had heard so much evil of me and my opinions.*" (See preceding Sermon, pp. 23, 24.) "Two or three of them were, I have reason to believe, in a state of excommunication; the others, as far as I know, were at that time recognized by the missionaries as in full communion. Huridas was one; Canaee Lall another; and Rammohun was, I think, the name of a third.* The first was a native preacher, and was certainly at that time, and long after, in the employment of the Serampore missionaries. The second was then in a state of excommunication, but for what crime I know not. The third I had heard preach some time before, with considerable ability, in the Hindoosthanee language. I entertain no doubt that if they had received any encouragement, several others would have followed their example; and I was assured by those who called upon me that this would be the case.

"I have also learned from Rammohun Roy, that since the commencement of his religious controversy with the Serampore missionaries, several of the native converts have, in like manner, called upon him at different times; and conceiving that his publications were directed, not against the corruptions of Christianity, but against Christianity itself, offered their services to preach against it, in places of worship to be erected at his expense, opposite to those already employed by the missionaries for the propagation of their sentiments.

"Of those learned and respectable natives with whom I am acquainted, who think well of Christianity without professing it, there is not one who admits the native converts to have been actuated by good motives. They may be prejudiced, but they possess far more favourable opportunities of becoming acquainted with the obliquities of the native character, than any that a European can enjoy."—*Ib. pp.* 57—59.

Mr. Adam has fully justified the complaints which even the missionaries themselves have uttered (see Sermon, p. 12, *note*) concerning the native preachers. "The number of native converts who preach," he observes, "is much more fluctuating and less certain than that of the country-born sub-missionaries. Scarcely has a native made a public

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* Yet it is of this person, I presume, that the *Missionary Register for* 1820, *p.* 39, speaks as "preaching at Dum-dum to his countrymen, and conversing with inquirers, not without an evident blessing."

profession of Christianity, and relinquished his caste by passing through the ordeal of baptism than, with lamentable inattention to the proper qualifications of a religious teacher, he is, in most cases, either employed by missionaries, or invited by his fellow-converts to assume that character by publicly preaching to his idolatrous countrymen. Long before the converts can have freed their minds from the deeply rivetted chains of superstition, far less can have acquired a sufficient knowledge, by ordinary means, of the Christian system, so as to be able to silence the shrewd and designing, and convince the intelligent and conscientious inquirer, the missionaries introduce them to scenes of angry contest and disputation, in which the personal and devotional virtues, just beginning to take root, are sacrificed for the sake of a loud voice and confident manner. The consequence is, that being lifted up with pride, they frequently render themselves liable to the public censure of their brethren, on account of some impropriety of conduct; and to this, along with other causes, I have no doubt may be attributed the suspensions and expulsions of native members from church communion, which, considering the small number of native members in even the largest church, cannot but be considered as extraordinarily frequent."—*Ib. pp.* 20, 21.

"There are some particulars respecting some of these native preachers which deserve to be mentioned. Chaudron is a young man who itinerates without receiving, like the others, any salary from the missionaries, and depends only on the aid of strangers. Abraham was formerly a domestic servant of the missionary who now employs him. Cassee, I know to be a man of exceedingly weak understanding. Subhroo was dismissed from the employment of Mr. J. Penney, one of the Calcutta Baptist missionaries for immorality, and was almost immediately taken under the instruction, and finally into the employment of the Serampore Baptist missionaries, although Mr. Penney called upon one of them, and gave him information of the conduct of which Subhroo had been guilty, and for which alone he had been dismissed. Haridas, in a conversation with Rammohun Roy, to whose house he had gone uninvited, contended for the Deity of Christ only in the same sense in which he contended for the Deity of Krishna, and had evidently admitted the incarnation of Christ only as an *addition* to the incarnations in which he had previously believed. Upon the whole, with respect to the native preachers and the native converts in general, it may be observed, that they are too few, too poor, too ignorant, and

too much despised by their countrymen, to make much impression by their labours."—*Ib. pp.* 22, 23.

It is unnecessary to add any more extracts from this interesting publication; or to offer any reflections on what have been produced. The proper inferences are too obvious to escape any reader, and too important, not to make a deep impression on th e minds of those who are concerned for the honour and the spread of the Gospel.

PAGE 45.

In the first number of the *Unitarian Fund Register*, there is a very interesting Letter addressed to Mr. Fox, the Secretary to the Unitarian Fund, by Mr. Adam. As the Register may not be in the hands of all the readers of this Sermon, and the Letter contains some very important remarks concerning the advantages which Unitarians possess for the propagation of Christianity in India, I have thought it advisable to subjoin the following extract.

"This country has peculiar claims upon you as Christians. Here is an immense population subject to the British Government, but ignorant of the Gospel, and unblessed with those elevated and purifying hopes which it conveys. You are possessed of the light of Christianity, of which they are destitute; and you have free access to them for the purpose of communicating it if you will avail yourselves of that privilege. The conquered naturally view with great respect all who belong to the caste of the conquerors, especially if the latter possess learning, and I, perhaps, may say piety, as they are by no means blind to the excellencies and defects of those who bear the Christian name. I have reason to suppose that they even exercise a very strict scrutiny over those who profess to teach them a religion better than their own; and the fact that they have discovered, or supposed that they have discovered, much that is selfish and worldly in the conduct of such, has operated powerfully against the propagation of the Gospel. On the other hand, if Christians of sound learning and rational piety, unfettered by worldly pursuits, and independent of pecuniary assistance from those to whom they are sent, engage in missionary labours in this country, they will command the respect of their bitterest native antagonists, and may be eminently useful in spreading the knowledge of the Gospel.

"As Unitarian Christians you possess advantages superior to those enjoyed by any other denomination. The principal classes who form the

object of missionary labour, are Europeans, their descendants born in the country, Mussulmans, and Hindoos. Among the persons belonging to the *first* class there is, it is true, a vast host of prejudices; but truth is gradually making its way, and time is discovering many more than might have been expected, who dare to think for themselves. There are even not a few who, from the unreasonableness and absurdity of the popular modes of Christian belief, have cast off all regard to religion itself. Two, if not three, persons, who formerly belonged to this description, now regularly attend my preaching, and I cannot but hope, that they will be gradually convinced of the truth, and imbibe the spirit of Christianity. One gentleman, in particular, has assured me, that for eighteen years that he has been in India he never once before attended any other place of worship, solely for the reason I have already mentioned. There are many, it is believed, in similar circumces, who would reject with disdain every attempt to convert them to Trinitarian Christianity, but who, if proper exertions were made, would yield to the more rational and more evangelical doctrines of Unitarianism.

"The *second* class are those born of European fathers and native mothers, and the offspring of those by intermarriages among themselves. This is a body of people who are just beginning to feel their own importance, and will, I doubt not, at a future period exercise a powerful influence over the destinies of this vast continent. Their religious and literary character is as yet unformed, or is at least only forming, and none can be so useful in leading to its completo developement as missionaries, and especially Unitarian missionaries, against whom their prejudices are much weaker than those of the pure European population. Convinced that they know little, they have in general an anxious desire to learn; and to minds in such a state, the pure, liberal and enlightened principles of Unitarian Christianity must prove highly acceptable.

"The Mussulmans, who compose the *third* class, are perhaps the least accessible to Christian missionaries, but of all missionaries they are most accessible to Unitarian missionaries. From the misconceptions which they entertain respecting Christianity, and their consequent prejudices against it, it is almost impossible for a missionary to get a hearing from a respectable or learned Mussulman. They know it principally, if not wholly, from what Mohammed has told them of it in the Koran, that is, as it existed in the sixth and seventh centuries, and what they do hear from Trinitarian missionaries tends too much to

confirm their erroneous notions. It is only Unitarian missionaries that can ever expect to obtain from them a patient hearing, and to superinduce, on the acknowledged principle of the Divine Unity, the pure morality and the purifying hopes of the Gospel.

The Hindoos form the *fourth* class, and amongst these there is a large majority of idolaters, and a small but increasing minority of theists. With respect to the former, a Trinitarian missionary is placed in inextricable difficulties which a Unitarian cannot feel, for after having convinced them of the absurdity of idolatry, he is obliged to refute himself by teaching them the supreme Deity of Jesus Christ. The same arguments which he employs against the idolaters, they may employ against him. Those whom I denominate theists, are the followers of the Vedant system of philosophy, and are, in fact, Unitarian Hindoos. This system has been of late revived in Bengal with considerable success, through the exertions of Rammohun Roy, and those who have embraced it form a small but highly respectable portion of the Hindoo community. From them the Trinitarian missionary experiences much greater dificulty than from their idolatrous countrymen, for here it is not as in the former case, one error struggling with another, but error contending against truth. The Unitarian Hindoo possesses a vantage-ground, from which the Trinitarian Christian never can dislodge him. Yet in them we have a proof that the doctrine of the Divine Unity alone does not humble the mind, restrain the passions, and reform the life, for no one is more deeply impressed with the necessity of giving them the light of Christianity than Rammohun Roy, who has had the best opportunities of knowing the effect which their conversion from idolatry to Unitarian Hindooism has produced. All these considerations combined, seem imperiously to call on English Unitarians to exert themselves according to their ability, in spreading the Gospel in this country. I hope in suggesting these, I shall not be considered presumptuous, or as casting a reflection upon your zeal. We can never be the worse for being told our duty, and encouraged to do it."

(Thomas Wilson and Sons, High-Ouseegate, York.)

OBSTACLES TO THE DIFFUSION OF UNITARIANISM,

AND THE

PROSPECT OF THEIR REMOVAL:

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE SUPPORTERS

OF THE

BRITISH AND FOREIGN

UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,

AT THEIR

ANNUAL MEETING,

JUNE 7, 1827.

BY

JOHN KENRICK, M. A.

TARDA VENIT DICTIS DIFFICILISQUE FIDES,
AT CERTE CREDEMUR AIT.

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A SERMON.

2 THESSALONIANS ii. 7:

"HE WHO NOW HINDERETH WILL HINDER, UNTIL HE BE TAKEN OUT OF THE WAY."

FEW passages of Scripture have given rise to greater variety of interpretations, than that from which these words are taken. By the generality of Protestant commentators it has been and is still considered, as a prophecy of the corruptions of the Church of Rome; some, however, not confining it to that church, but including in it all which have upheld an unscriptural creed by means inconsistent with the true spirit of the Gospel. Such an application the Roman Catholic commentators of course strenuously resist; and even among Protestants there have not been wanting those who have referred the apostle's words to much nearer events,—to the Gnostic corruptions of the Gospel, or the false teachers who deluded the Jews into those insurrections against the Roman power, which ended in the destruction of their temple and nation. But it is unnecessary that I should inquire which or whether any of these interpretations agrees with the apostle's

meaning, as I confess that it is my intention to use his words only as implying this general truth respecting the counsels of God, that their developement is retarded by obstacles which, for wise purposes, he permits to exist: and I shall proceed to apply this truth to the purpose for which we have this day assembled, by pointing out some of those circumstances which retard the progress of Unitarianism, along with the grounds of hope for their removal.

On such occasions as the present, it has been more usual to illustrate some of the scriptural evidences which justify the peculiarities of our faith, or to shew its practical tendencies, or to repel the unfair attacks to which it has been exposed; and from this custom has arisen a series of powerful defences of our principles, which have scarcely left any thing new to be offered. I have, therefore, preferred to call your attention to circumstances affecting the diffusion of those principles which, as I firmly believe, are independent of their evidence, and which will remain in a great degree unchanged, though men mighty in the Scriptures open and allege from them, that our simple creed is truly that which was once delivered to the saints, and eloquent men adorn the structure which has been raised on the sure foundation of the word of God. Had we met together, only to produce the temporary excitement of a factitious enthusiasm, to give ourselves a confidence which sober judgment does not warrant, and to impose on others by the expression of that confi-

dence, I should abstain altogether from the mention of difficulties to be encountered; but such I am convinced is not the purpose of our assembling. It is true we hope for that excitement of our zeal, which is kindled by the sympathy of men united for the attainment of an object which they agree to think just and great; we look for that increase of confidence which is the natural result of perceiving, that many hearts are interested in the same cause with our own, many minds intent on its promotion, many and various endowments devoted to its attainment. And by cherishing these sentiments in connexion with a solemn act of religious worship, we desire to remind ourselves, that the glory of God is the great object which we ought to seek, his power and blessing that on which we should rely; and to breathe the spirit of Christian love and charity over the avowal of those sentiments which necessarily place us in opposition to so many of our Christian brethren. These are our purposes, and they will best be promoted by considering the relation in which our religious tenets place us to the opinions, feelings, and interests, of the rest of the world, in all its bearings, whether favourable or unfavourable, both that we may fully understand what is demanded of us, and may form that rational estimate of the probability of success, which is the best preservative against fickleness and desertion. The apostle did not conceal from his Ephesian converts, that it was not only with flesh and blood that they must wres-

tle, but "against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places;" but frankly acknowledging this, used it as a motive with them "to take unto them the whole armour of God." Had the Corinthians not already known what was their calling, he would have told them, "that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, were called;" but he would also have assured them, "that the weak things of the world had been chosen, in the purposes of God, to confound the things that were mighty, and the things that were despised and were not, to bring to nought the things that were." It is our true wisdom, then, not to close our eyes against difficulties, but to compare the value of the object with the exertions necessary for its attainment. The zeal which is fed from some superficial source, is like the brook of the desert, irregular and useless; at one time foaming in idle fury beyond its bounds, at another dried up and consumed out of its place; bringing little honour or benefit to our cause while it lasts, and yet when it decays or ceases, used as an argument against us, as though there were nothing in our principles which could inspire a more permanent attachment. We acknowledge that the age of miraculous conversions is past, we look for no supernatural interpositions of Providence, but only for the blessing of God, bestowed through the ordinary channels of its dispensation, on the faithful and

zealous use of human means; our only rational motive, therefore, for engaging singly or in union in attempts to diffuse our own opinions, is the conviction that benevolence requires us to bear our testimony against pernicious error, and that the difficulties of the undertaking, though great, are not insurmountable.

I. First, then, among the things that hinder and will hinder, until taken out of the way, I reckon the reluctance of mankind to undergo any extensive change in their opinions, and most of all in their religious opinions. If we suppose that a state of society existed widely different, it must be confessed from that in which we live, in which men's interests were not involved in their opinions, by institutions which make them a qualification or disqualification for the enjoyment of worldly advantages, and that in such a society a small body of men arose, endeavouring to convince their fellow-countrymen that their opinions, however sanctioned by length of tradition, however firmly rooted in their minds, are destitute of foundation, would they be heard with patience, and their arguments be calmly refuted or candidly admitted? Certainly not, while human nature remains what it is. Pride and self-love take fire at the insinuation, that others have discovered what we have overlooked; the assailant of established opinions, with whatever meekness and caution he may proceed, must appear to assume the office of a teacher to those whom he

endeavours to convince; and none who have been accustomed to regard themselves as oracles of truth, can easily be persuaded to quit the chair of intellectual authority, and sit at the feet of those whom they have hitherto considered as their disciples. Of all dominion, that which is exercised over the mind of others, seems most to flatter the pride of power, which is inherent in the breast of man. To possess empire over the spiritual realms of thought, to bind the subtle powers of the understanding in the chains of implicit belief, seems to place him on an almost super-human elevation above his fellows. The exercise of this dominion begets the belief of a right, and resistance of course is regarded as rebellion. Truths of science, as well as of religion, truths the most remote from action, as well as those which are most immediately connected with the conduct and the interests of men, have experienced the most violent hostility as long as they were innovations: this temper has shewn itself under all forms of government, (for the popular mind is not at all more patient of contradiction than that of a single tyrant,) and has tinctured almost every dispute respecting opinions, with an infusion of needless and unbecoming bitterness. Under the influence of this temper, men close their eyes to the light, because it is new and they love the ancient darkness better; and thus generations may pass away between the time when truth is exhibited with the evidence of demonstration and that at which it takes its un-

disputed place in the great system of human knowledge.

An important change of opinion is as displeasing to indolence as it is to pride; it obliges men to rouse themselves for their defence; to resist is troublesome, though it should be successful, and the more troublesome, the longer the interval during which their peace has been unbroken and their slumber profound. Such are the feelings which every one excites, who stands forth as the champion of opinions inconsistent with those which mankind have so long received, that they have become, by familiarity, a part of their intellectual and moral being. But the reformer in religion must expect that the storm of ill-will will fall with double fury on his head. It should seem as if religious faith, being conversant with things not sensible but unseen, not possessed but hoped for, required that its vividness should be cherished by the sympathetic feeling and accordant faith of other men, and hence has arisen, in part, that peculiar asperity which has given a disgraceful pre-eminence to the rancour of *theological* controversy. It is doubtless for wise purposes, that a quick sensibility to any attack on our religious principles has been implanted in our frame; as they are the issues of our spiritual life, it was fit that, like the organs which perform the most essential of our vital functions, they should be guarded from destruction by a quick perception of any threatening injury. The salutary operation of

this law is designed to prevent us from making a light and hasty change; in its excess it is one of the most powerful obstacles with which they have to contend, who endeavour to convince others of error in their religious creed.

That those who think our opinions false as well as new, should throw every possible hindrance in the way of their diffusion, was perfectly natural, but it was less to be expected that men should be found who, not denying their truth, should object to their zealous promulgation, on the ground that, from their novelty, they will excite angry hostility, destructive of the peace of society and injurious to Christian charity; or wish that at least we should proceed with the greatest caution, and only gradually disclose the whole extent of our opposition to general opinion. As far as this is meant to enforce on every one, who takes part in religious controversy, the duty of joining the wisdom of the serpent with the meekness of the dove, promulgating as truths only well-weighed opinions, propounding them in a humble sense of his own fallibility, and abstaining from every thing that can excite unnecessary prejudice, who that loves the truth in sincerity would not adopt the advice? But if it be meant that we are to keep back what, after the best examination, we are convinced is both true and important, because it will meet with violent opposition in the actual state of opinion, I must protest against the advice as founded on erroneous principles, and leading to a reserve and

dissimulation which pass by too ready a transition into positive hypocrisy. To the much extolled maxim, "that if the wise man have his hand full of truth he will only open his little finger," I will venture to oppose, as more worthy of being a Christian's rule, the declaration of the apostle who, though he began by teaching his converts only the first principles of the oracles of God, when bidding farewell to those who should see his face no more, could take them to record, "that he had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God." Acts xx. 27. The solitary truth allowed to escape from the hand would probably be more mischievous, than if it had gone forth in its natural union with other truths. Let us not be misled by false analogies, and change the exception into the rule. The stomach, enfeebled by disease or want of food, cannot safely receive what would not burthen the healthy organ; the eye, unaccustomed to the light, might be blinded by too sudden an irradiation; and the analogy is so far applicable to the mind, that it may be wise partially to communicate the truth to those who are not prepared to receive the whole truth. But does this authorize any man to consider the whole generation of his contemporaries as a vast infirmary of sickly minds, to whom the food of knowledge and the light of truth are only to be dealt in the minutest portions? It is a part of the plan of Providence for the education of the human race, that their attainment of truth should be progressive;

but what mortal is placed so high in intellect above his fellow-creatures, that he is to be the judge what the rate of that progress should be? The probability is, that wherever there is one mind capable of discovering the truth, there are many capable of receiving it; and if there should be many more to hinder than to aid its diffusion, still the sooner it is made known, the sooner it will triumph. "Let then him that hath the word of the Lord declare his word faithfully." Should, after all, the honest, humble, diligent seeker after truth be the involuntary means of diffusing error, let him not fear that a righteous judge will impute it to him as a crime, more than if, intending to bring an offering to the sanctuary, he had unwittingly cast a counterfeited shekel into the treasury of God.

II. If the feelings of men are so strongly repugnant to every attempt at innovation in religious opinion, what a formidable array of opposition must be expected from their interests! This implication of interests with opinions, which forms so great a hindrance to the diffusion of a doctrine which, like Unitarianism, tends to remove the foundation of every popular system, arises partly from circumstances which belong to all opinions deeply rooted in the general belief, but still more from the political and religious institutions of our country. "How," might some one ask in his simplicity, who knew Christianity only in the Scriptures, "how can religion, the objects of which are things spiritual and

eternal, be so mingled with the petty interests and sordid passions of this world, as to bias men in their judgment, or tempt them to insincerity in their profession?" Alas! it has been the fate of religious opinions more than any other to be mixed with temporal interests. It is in religion alone, that a certain set of doctrines which the wisdom of some distant age has pronounced true, are protected from innovation by the united influence of rewards for those who profess and punishment for those who impugn them. The institutions of every Christian country, and not least our own, seem to have been framed under the conviction, that nothing was so much to be dreaded, as that the mind should be left to its own decisions in respect to religious doctrine. Wherever opinions are made the test and qualification for the enjoyment of worldly honours and emoluments, wherever there is a *church* (using the word in its secular, not its scriptural sense) which can reward conformity to its creed and punish dissent from it, it matters not whether by fire, by penalties, or by disabilities, there every other system must contend for acceptance at a manifest disadvantage. The possessors of the emoluments and honours which are thus exclusively bestowed, and all their expectants, whether in near and reasonable prospect or only in the airy visions of ambition, unite in firm phalanx against the innovator. Nor does the injury to the cause of truth rest here. He who by belonging to this favoured and exclusive community

has been exalted in the eyes of the world and in his own estimation, can scarcely bring himself to think of those who differ from him, as deserving respect for the exercise of the most sacred privileges of rational beings and Christians; or to meet them, as man should meet his fellow-men, in the equal field of scripture and argument. Placed on the vantage-ground of an established creed, he considers every dissident as an arrogant and presumptuous man, too proud to submit his faith to lawful authority; for patient reasoning he is apt to substitute railing accusation, to upbraid him with the sin of schism and threaten him with the penalties of heresy.

Does not such a state of things offer the greatest hindrance to the free course of truth? There is no want of candour in the imputation, that many are led by it to profess what they do not believe, that many more are insensibly biassed and inclined to admit arguments as valid, in support of the popular creed, the futility of which they would otherwise readily discern, and that it diffuses, through a still wider circle, a spirit of aversion and hostility to all by whom the prevalence of established opinion is endangered. In no other country is this result seen so strongly and extensively as in our own. In the Roman Catholic kingdoms of Europe, the predominant religion either kills the seed of all varieties of religious opinion, or allows them only a sickly existence beneath its wide-spreading and noxious shade. In other Protestant countries again, the

established creed is either flexible enough to allow of great latitude of belief, or the advantages enjoyed by one religious party above another are so small, that men's passions are not violently engaged in the struggle to appropriate them. The apple of discord is not of gold, and therefore excites no deadly animosities. But in our own country, while the church is so amply endowed both with wealth and power, that her offices are the object of ambition, the truth of her doctrines is open to the freest discussion, and a great change of public opinion on this point could hardly fail to endanger the continued possession of her revenues and honours. The apprehension with which her members view such a change invigorates their resistance and embitters their animosity against all who attack the articles of their church. This cause, it may be said, operates equally against all Dissenters, and is no peculiar hindrance to the growth of Unitarian principles. But against what other body of Dissenters do the ministers of the established church express such unmitigated hostility, against what others do they exert so zealously every influence which they are allowed to use, in order, if possible, to blot our very name from the list of religious professors? Is it so long since we were forbidden by law to avow, much more to propagate, our opinions? Nay, are we at this moment sure, that one edge of the sword of persecution, which we had hoped was for ever blunted and broken, does not remain as sharp as

ever?* Can it be believed that those who avow their regret at the repeal of persecuting statutes, do not use every method which wealth, name, station, and influence, may give them, to check the growth of this which they deem, and with justice as regards themselves, the most dangerous of all varieties of heresy? Strong minds may not be impressed by the constant repetition of feeble arguments and groundless accusations; and generous minds may feel that the violence of a numerous and powerful body is a motive for siding with the smaller and weaker party; but men in general are not so constituted. They catch the tone of the rich, the noble, and the learned, and readily believe all evil of those against whom so much is said. The prejudice thus excited against us, and which no arts are spared to keep alive, spreads far and wide through society, and makes it impossible for the advocates of Unitarianism to obtain, I will not say merely a *fair* hearing, but from large classes of their countrymen any hearing at all.

III. Another circumstance which hinders, and will hinder till it be taken out of the way, is the very general prevalence of the opinion, that the free exercise of the understanding upon religious subjects is dangerous, everlasting salvation depending on faith in certain tenets, which we may thus be led to re-

* See the suggestion of Lord Chancellor Eldon respecting the common-law penalties for denying the Trinity, Mon. Repos. O. S. Vol. XII. pp. 436—438.

nounce. This opinion, deduced from misapprehension of the language of Scripture, has been perpetuated with the greatest care by the leaders of every church as the very charter of their spiritual power. The Romish church has led the way, and maintains inflexibly to this hour, that there is no salvation but in communion with herself, the authorized interpreter of Scripture, to whom the promise of an infallible judgment in religious doctrine was given by Christ, and is confirmed by miracles wrought in each successive age to renew the ratification of the promise. Every Protestant church has kept to the doctrine of the Romish on this subject, as closely as it was possible to do, in any consistency with their open separation from her; and though, when pressed in debate, it may come out, that the infallible church, beyond whose pale no salvation is to be found, is in their sense only that spiritual community which is composed of all true believers in Christ, this truism is kept carefully out of sight, except in such emergencies of argument. Their ordinary language and conduct are framed upon the assumption, that *they* are the true believers, in whose communion alone is safety; and when they have had the power, they have seldom shewn themselves deficient in inclination, to keep men by constraint within their fold, or bring them back to it by violence. If others have established a distinction between those *essential* articles of faith which cannot be rejected without perdition, and the *non-essentials* on which men may

safely differ, we at least gain little by the relaxation for I know of no church which does not regard as essentials those very articles which our name implies that we reject. If others again (for the doctrine is at once so fearful and so absurd that its very advocates are glad to escape from it) profess, that they hold the sentence of damnation to have been pronounced only against those who reject certain doctrines from corrupt motives, even this concession avails us little; for how rarely do we meet with an opponent who does not think himself authorized to conclude, that if we were honest we must agree with him! Even those who in their hearts renounce the doctrine that salvation depends upon the reception of peculiar opinions, yet, from habit or compulsion of their office, continue to hold the high-sounding and terrific language which has been framed upon this supposition; and the many, over whom words and phrases exercise a kind of magic power, shrink back within the circle by which their spiritual rulers have circumscribed them, lest, by stepping beyond it, they should bring on themselves the denunciations which are so often rung in their ears. Of this weapon, none, I think, make a more unsparing use, than those who, dissenting like ourselves from the discipline and ritual of Episcopacy, carry their doctrinal system still further than the established church herself. There is something imposing in *her* voice when she tells us what we may or may not believe consistently with salvation: her anti-

quity, her outward splendour, her temporal power, the learning and station of her ministers, all dispose the mind to submission; and she speaks with the more calmness, because she feels that she speaks with authority. But the ministers of dissenting churches can give no such weight to their anathemas, and in order to guard their communities from the incursions of heresy, they are obliged to make up what they want in dignity and power by vigilant inquisition and acrimonious invective. They warn those over whom they have influence to flee from the contagion of Unitarian principles; to resist, as the undoubted suggestion of the great enemy of man, the first inclination to read or hear what we can offer in our defence, unless with the firmest resolution that it shall only strengthen them in their present faith. The consequence is, that a large proportion of our Christian brethren know nothing more definite of our creed, than that it is the sure perdition of every one who embraces it.

Were I called upon to say which of all the corruptions of Christianity had been most injurious to mankind, I should not point to the long oblivion of the unity of God, nor to the mysterious hypotheses respecting the origin, being, and person of the Saviour; no—nor even to that doctrine which teaches, that the Father of all was induced to remit his wrath against his feeble children, by the suffering and satisfaction of another Infinite Being; not even this appears to me so baneful in its tendency, as the

doctrine once held by every community of Christians, that there is no salvation but in believing what each declares to be the doctrine of the Scriptures. From the Bishop of Rome, in the plenitude of infallibility, through the long gradation of spiritual power, to him who thinks heaven but a colony from his own little church on earth, this opinion has been the parent of every unholy disposition and evil work. The lawfulness and even duty of persecution, in order that the soul might be saved by the suffering of the body, was one of its simplest corollaries; the permanent existence of an authorized and infallible interpreter of Scripture is the only supposition by which it can be reconciled, even in appearance, with the benevolence and justice of God. It has poisoned the springs of the charities of life, by leading men to regard each other as condemned of heaven, for speculative and trifling differences of religious opinion; it has perverted and confounded their moral notions by setting up a fanciful and arbitrary standard of virtue, in orthodoxy of belief, instead of the simple, practical and scriptural test of "doing justice, and loving mercy, and walking humbly with God." We, my brethren, renounce and abjure the doctrine, that man can forfeit his hope of everlasting happiness by any speculative opinion which he has honestly embraced, while he thus conforms to what the Lord his God requires of him. We know that we too might work on the terrors of mankind, by representing our tenets

as essential to salvation; we know that we sacrifice some of the most necessary elements of a religious party, by representing the gospel as comprehensive rather than exclusive; but sooner shall our cause sink as low as its bitterest enemy could desire, than we will appeal to the bad passions of the human heart in its support, and bring dishonour on the gospel and its author. If our zeal cannot be kept alive by philanthropy and Christian love, let it be extinguished! We will never kindle it with fire borrowed from unhallowed altars. Religious faith is the conviction produced by evidence offered on subjects of religion; and surely the world must ere long agree, that as evidence cannot operate on all minds alike, we are not criminal, far less liable to everlasting perdition, for judging differently from others respecting the language of Scripture.

IV. I will only advert to one other hindrance with which Unitarianism has to contend, and that is, the prevalent opinion that it leads to infidelity. In regard to not a few of our fellow-christians, I believe that this cause will be found to resolve itself into the last; for Christianity is in their minds so identified with orthodoxy, that without the latter as there can be no salvation, so there can be no true faith. To relinquish what they call the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, is with them the same thing as to relinquish the gospel itself. If no articles remain in the creed but these, "that there is one God the Father, of whom are all things and we in him;

and one Lord Jesus Christ by whom are all things and we by him, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption, who has brought life and immortality to light, and by whom God will one day judge the world in righteousness, rendering to every man according to his deeds:" if this be what you mean by the gospel, it is in their view little else or little better than infidelity. To such judges we can only reply, "If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's." Others, better able to discern the things that differ, and not confounding Unitarianism with unbelief, regard it as only a stage or halting-place in the progress thither. They allege that the fact corresponds with the natural tendency of our principles, which by exalting reason necessarily leads us to slight the authority of Scripture. To this often-repeated charge of making reason the standard by which to judge what revelation teaches, we can only reply, that neither in ancient nor in modern times have we adopted any such principles of interpretation, and that the office which we assign to reason is the same as others have allotted to her, without any impeachment of their reverence for divine revelation.* As

* "Illam duntaxat scripturarum interpretationem pro orthodoxa et genuina agnoscimus, quæ ex ipsis est petita scripturis *(ex ingenio utique ejus linguæ in qua sunt scriptæ, secundum circumstantias item expensæ, et pro ratione locorum vel similium vel dissimilium, plurium*

to the question of fact, it is surely not fair to infer any tendency in Unitarianism to produce infidelity, because many who once were orthodox, having detached themselves from the faith in which they were brought up, went on to deny Christianity altogether, as the rock once loosened from its place continues to roll on, long after it has reached the plain. That among those whose faith has from the first been built on Unitarian principles, any greater tendency to unbelief has shewn itself than among the professors of other religious systems, is altogether an unfounded assertion; and this is the only fair criterion. In what other religious community are greater pains taken to make the young able to give a reason of the hope that is in them? While in other societies they learn to lisp and repeat by rote mysterious dogmas respecting the Godhead, or in unmeaning hyperboles to accuse themselves of a radical depra-

quoque et clariorum, expositæ) cum regula fidei et charitatis congruit, et ad gloriam Dei hominumque salutem eximie facit." Confess. Helv. II., quoted in Winer's *Comparative Darstellung des Lehrbegriffs*, 1824. He observes, (p. 17,) that it was set forth by the preachers of Zurich, in 1566, and afterwards approved by all the Reformed cantons and the churches of Geneva, Savoy, Poland, Hungary, and Scotland. The addition "cum regula fidei," &c., is a proof of that timidity and inconsistency on the part of Protestants in the application of their own principle, which affords the Catholics a natural ground of triumph. For what is this *rule of faith?* If derived from Scripture, then it cannot surely ascertain the sense of Scripture; if from some other source, what then becomes of the Protestant doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture? There are, in fact, few Protestant churches which do not practically make their Articles, Catechism, or Liturgy, the *regula fidei* by which the Bible is to be interpreted.

vity of nature and inability for every good work, with us they are carefully taught the simple and intelligible evidence, "that Jesus of Nazareth was approved of God by miracles, signs, and wonders, which God did by him." Does the imputation ground itself upon any backwardness which Unitarians have shewn to defend the Gospel from the attacks of unbelievers? Our communion has furnished much more than its proportion of advocates for the truth of Christianity, and it is not a little remarkable that those who have been most successful in this work, from Grotius and Locke, to Paley* and Watson, have either shewn a close conformity with our creed, or have laboured under the suspicion of a wide departure from the standard of orthodoxy. At the present moment we hear comparatively little of unbelief among the lower classes of society: where it does exist, I know that the preachers of Unitarianism are among its most active and successful opponents, in meekness of wisdom regaining those whom harsh and damnatory denunciations would have alienated for ever from the Gospel, and preserving others for a rational faith, whose understandings had revolted against what had been taught them as Christianity. The disposition to renounce and revile religion, which shewed itself a few years back, was, I am persuaded, chiefly the

* If Paley, when he wrote on the Evidences of Christianity, really entertained the sentiments which appear in his Discourses, he has been very careful not to embarrass himself with the defence of them.

effect of resentment against a church whose kingdom is of this world, and which lends itself too readily to the harsh measures of the ruling powers not to share in their odium. It has in great measure disappeared as gratitude and confidence have succeeded to irritation and distrust in the feelings of the people towards their governors; but, should this or any other cause produce a similar state of the public mind, I doubt not that Unitarian preachers and writers will approve themselves as zealous in defence of their faith, as when Lardner vindicated the character of Jesus against the vulgar calumnies of Woolston, or Priestley maintained the reasonableness and authority of Revelation against the subtle philosophy of the eighteenth century.

I might mention other things which "hinder and will hinder till they be taken out of the way," but I have said enough to shew, as I proposed, that, wholly independent of the truth or falsehood of our opinions, there exist obstacles to their diffusion, deeply seated in the institutions of our country, and in the feelings and views of our fellow-countrymen. That they are embraced under all these obstacles by many by whom they are not openly avowed, cannot admit a doubt: it must be confirmed by every one who converses much with mankind. Many think with us, who deem the matter not of sufficient moment to be worth the obloquy which the profession of our creed entails; many, whose temporal interests would suffer by withdrawing from the na-

tional church; many, who imagine that, as the national church, it claims support like other institutions of their country, whether they agree with its doctrines or not; many, who fear to be thought infidels, if known to be Unitarians. The knowledge that such obstacles exist to the increase of our numbers, shews us that we should not look to numbers as a criterion, nor suppose that we gain no ground unless we can rival other sects in reports of conversions; we should rather fix our attention on those gradual and therefore sure revolutions in sentiment, which remove ancient prejudices, or prepare the way for their removal. Such changes an attentive observer may discover. Even if the extraordinary intellectual activity of the present day did not bear directly on religion, it could not continue without producing an effect upon religion. In the great circle of human knowledge every radiant point sheds its light on all the rest. However some may reject the idea of a progressive religion, nothing is more certain than that it must receive modifications from the intellectual state of the world. Though kindled from heaven, the brightness of its flame depends on the purity of the atmosphere in which it burns. Creeds may remain unchanged, while the faith of their nominal adherents no more resembles that of their framers, than the race that now tills the banks of the Nile resembles those who are embalmed in the Egyptian catacombs. Among a people who use their understanding freely on all other sub-

jects, blind reverence for the opinions and institutions of antiquity, which is one great support of orthodoxy, must give place to the determination to try every thing on its own evidence, and by its own merits. This exercise of the reason must be favourable to the system which can without reserve or evasion endure its application. For though we disclaim, as I have already said, the imputation of first determining what is rational, and by that test what has been revealed, we do rejoice herein and will rejoice, that, as the result of our scriptural research, reason and revelation do not appear at variance. We are convinced that no doctrines can ultimately prevail among a people allowed to think and examine for themselves, which, like Transubstantiation, involve a sensible absurdity, or, like the Trinity, a metaphysical contradiction, or, like the doctrine of Atonement in its genuine form, are utterly repugnant to what nature shews and reason proves of the moral attributes of God. The surrender of their understandings is a price which men will not long consent to pay for the belief of any system of theology.

The same general activity and independence of thought tends to the immediate mitigation, and ultimate though distant removal, of the obstacle which arises from the *establishment* of the Trinitarian and Calvinistic doctrines. Except among the clergy themselves, and those whose minds have been completely moulded by them, the notion of any other

right in the church than what the state confers upon her, is fast wearing away. It will probably yet be long before even Protestant Europe will be convinced of the iniquity and mischief of establishing one form of Christianity, to the exclusion of all others; but there are countries whose laws have been framed in freedom from that overbearing influence which the church possessed, when the constitutions of almost all our states were formed; and from America Europe may one day learn how much the task of government will be simplified, the peace of society promoted, and the dignity and purity of religion itself enhanced, by taking away from the church the power which engenders pride and provokes animosity, and the wealth which is a lure to worldly ambition, a temptation to indolence and to dishonest conformity. In the mean time, let the example of America teach us what is the natural tendency of Unitarian Christianity to rapid diffusion, when those hindrances are taken out of the way which obstruct its progress here.

But it is a still stronger ground of hope, that the intellectual activity of the present day is directed in no small degree to the subject of religion, and that the study of the Scriptures begins to obtain amongst us much more attention than it has hitherto enjoyed. To misapprehension of the language of Scripture, I attribute by far the greater part of the existing corruptions of Christianity, in producing which, I see no reason to assign any conside-

rable share to bad motives.* That their authors should have erroneously supposed that they had the warrant of Scripture for their respective systems, will not appear incredible, when we consider how rapid was the decline of knowledge in the ages which immediately followed the propagation of the gospel, to what a depth of barbarous ignorance the world had sunk before the edifice of Anti-christian doctrine was completed, and how widely different were the language, manners, and opinions of the nations which formed the bulk of the Christian church, from those of that Eastern people by whom the books of the New Testament were written. The results of these misconceptions have been propagated downwards to the present hour, in the popular creeds; and the patient study of many generations of learned men has been necessary, to enable us to enter fully into the circumstances under which the authors of the New Testament wrote, and the influences thus exerted upon their phraseology. We may hope, therefore, that the increased attention to biblical study, which, from the example of neighbouring nations, appears to be communicating itself to our own, will powerfully advance our cause. Doubtless the adherents of other opinions will say, that they feel a similar con-

* I speak of speculative doctrines; for many practices and institutions appear to have been engrafted, from selfish motives, on the simplicity of the Gospel.

fidence, but that they have an equal ground for it I shall not admit, until some country is pointed out to me, in which the study of the Bible has been zealously pursued with all the aids of modern erudition, and the result has been to strengthen men's belief in those doctrines against which we contend. I may ask without vain glory, by what other body of Christians has the precept to search the Scriptures ever been more unreservedly obeyed? We seek no leave from priest or pontiff to read them for ourselves; we are not mocked by the permission to judge of their doctrines, coupled with an injunction to interpret them in conformity with articles and catechisms. We put the sacred volume into the hands of those who are to be our future ministers in holy things, that they may use their own judgment on its contents, and call them to no account for the result of their examination. The difference between ourselves and other religious bodies in these respects, might enable an impartial observer to determine which side feared, and which invited, the application of the test of Scripture to its creed.

Whatever cause there may be to regret the circumstances which at this moment have raised such a tempest of religious controversy between the members of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant churches, I cannot but regard it as appointed by Providence for the benefit of both, and ultimately as the means of opening their minds to the recep-

tion of a more scriptural faith. We have been told by the acutest champion of Popery in our own times, that Unitarians are of all Protestants the most consistent, and carry the principles of the Reformation to their fullest extent;* and in this declaration, though intended by its author as the bitterest taunt, we acknowledge a truth, while we despise the sneer. The orthodox Protestant, who has come to the contest, expecting an easy triumph over the Catholic, by proving to him how little of his creed is found in Scripture, will be staggered when the Catholic proves to him in his turn, how little of his own can be derived from it. He will find that he can escape from the admission of transubstantiation, only by that plea of figurative language which the Unitarian takes up to prove that a great deal of the popular theology is built on figures of speech, never designed by those who used them to be taken in a literal sense. And thus He whose prerogative it is to bring good out of evil, and cause the wrath of man to praise him, may design to overrule the angry passions which an unjust policy has engendered, to the accomplishment of a great moral and intellectual change, which could not have been effected by gentler means.

But while the slow course of events is thus removing hindrances to the reception of pure

* Lingard, Tracts, (1826,) pp. 42, 132.

Christianity, we ought to endeavour to be workers together with God, by employing our most zealous exertions for the same end. For though we can do nothing against the truth, we may do much for the truth. Where the work is vast and the labourers are few, not only energy, but combination is necessary, and the existence of that ASSOCIATION, to the promotion of whose objects this day's services are more especially devoted, proves that Unitarians are fully sensible of the importance of union and co-operation in the diffusion of their principles. Although of recent origin in its present form, it claims your confidence and support, by appealing to the effects which, under a different name, it had produced in the previous twenty years of its existence. It avails itself of every method of presenting the principles of Unitarianism to public view; it collects the contributions of our wealthier and more flourishing communities, for the support of the feebler and more obscure; it unites us for the defence of those civil and religious privileges which we already enjoy, or the attainment of what is still wanting to the full birthright of British citizens; and it connects in brotherhood, sympathy and mutual aid, our scattered churches, not only in this kingdom, but in distant quarters of the globe.

If, among its various objects, I were to select one peculiarly calculated to remove the hindrances to the adoption of Unitarian principles, and secure

them a firm footing among our countrymen, it would be the promotion of popular instruction, by means of the pulpit and the press. The higher classes have abundant sources of religious information within their reach, and are apt to consider such topics with indifference, or merely in a worldly view; it is among the middle and lower classes that zeal for religious truth, purely as such, will be chiefly found. As it is their activity, industry, and intelligence, which gives its character in these respects to the whole nation, so the religious character of the community is stamped by what they are in doctrine and practice. They follow only at a long interval the real changes of opinion in the powerful and lettered class; they retain the truth most firmly when once possessed, and are most tenacious of error when once thoroughly imbued with it. This was remarkably illustrated in the first ages of the Christian church. While philosophic minds were busied with those subtle speculations respecting the nature of God and the person of Christ, which at last usurped the place of the primitive faith, the "plain and unlettered men" held fast the doctrine of the Divine Unity, and refused to listen to the theories which the learned had devised for reconciling the monarchy of the One God with the deity of two other beings. The case is now changed, and the great task is to produce a conviction of the truth of Uni-

tarianism in the minds of this class of society. So great is their power, that, leaving force out of the question, I am convinced, that even were the ministers of religion generally in favour of one system of doctrine, and the bulk of the people of another, the pastors would be compelled to yield to their flocks, if they were so fettered by the articles and constitution of their church, as not to be able directly to attack those opinions which were deeply rooted in the minds of the common people. I cannot, therefore, think that Unitarianism has obtained a safe and permanent footing in any country till the people at large have been made fully and freely acquainted with its distinct and proper evidence. That apparent acquiescence which results from their pastors' abstaining from all mention of the doctrines of orthodoxy, while the language of their creeds and formularies remains the same, is delusive, and may be succeeded by a rapid and extensive re-action. Happily among ourselves there is no such concealment, and therefore, if we increase more slowly and encounter more opposition, we are more certain of the ground which we gain. Those who devote themselves to this particular walk of instruction, will be esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake, by all who wish our cause to prosper. They are laying a deep and solid foundation, and their labour, though less conspicuous than that of others, is equally essential to the stability of

the building, which, fitly framed together, "groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord."

What then remains, but that I exhort you in the words of the same apostle, "Brethren be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap if ye faint not"? If it were necessary for St. Paul twice to enforce this caution,* it will hardly be found superfluous by those who are engaged in an undertaking of which the fruits are necessarily in some measure distant. We are apt to consider these things rather with reference to the span of time which our earthly being occupies, than to the infinite duration of God and the vast extent of the counsels of his Providence. We cast the seed into the ground, and forthwith expect the harvest; but the great year of the Divine government is not divided by our signs and seasons; it stretches backward and forward into the depth of unknown ages. We believe that the cause in which we are engaged, being the cause of truth, virtue, and pure religion, must be successful, according to the just and wise dispensations of God; we know that already it has triumphed, and is going on to conquer; but the period is far distant, probably, when every thing that hindereth shall be taken out of the way. Let us not, then, abandon the good work in which we have engaged, disheartened because the pace of

* Gal. vi. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 13.

human improvement is so different from the lightning speed of our wishes and imaginations, far less in petulant discontent, because our labour is ill-requited and obscure. Let us rather "lift up the hands that hang down and strengthen the feeble knees," and, having cheerfully and zealously discharged our part as advocates of the truth, leave the times and the seasons of its final establishment to Him, whose thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways. Amen.

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A

LETTER

TO THE

BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S,

ON

SOME EXTRAORDINARY PASSAGES,

IN A

CHARGE,

DELIVERED TO THE CLERGY

OF HIS DIOCESE,

IN SEPTEMBER, 1813.

BY A LAY SECEDER.

George Wilson Meadley

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A

LETTER

TO THE

BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

My Lord,

As the bill, repealing the various penalties, enacted, by the bigotry and intolerance of a former age, against those who impugn the doctrine of the *Trinity*, passed through both Houses of Parliament without objection, and even with the express concurrence of the primate and another most respectable prelate*, I naturally concluded that all idea of maintaining the tenets of the church of England by proscription, had been wisely abandoned by the episcopal bench. I scarcely expected to hear the repeal of those penalties lamented, as "the loss of guards intended for the protection of our common Christianity", even from your Lordship's zeal.

* Dr. G. H. Law, Bishop of Chester.

And I cannot readily suppress my astonishment, that, after acquiescing by your silence, in the unanimous decision of the legislature, you should have represented that decision, in a *Charge to your Clergy*, as a matter of serious regret. You say, indeed, that "the event concerns you, not only as members of the established church, but as Christians"; although I do not see how it can, in the latter case, affect you, except as a source of joy and exultation, that another fragment of intolerance has been removed.

The laws, my Lord, so recently repealed, were enacted towards the close of the 17th century, to stop the progress of free enquiry, and to silence those enlightened advocates for the sole *Deity* and *supremacy* of JEHOVAH, whose arguments it was not otherwise found easy to refute. Your Lordship, no doubt, would give a different coloring to the grounds of their enactment: but what "wild notions and irreligious doctrines" can you point out in the *Unitarian Tracts* of that period; what "enthusiasts and levellers" can you find among the friends and associates of Locke? You admit that "the Scotch laws enacting the penalty of *death* in such cases, required mitigation and amendment"; but you maintain that "it was not necessary to repeal the restraining disabilities of the English law": although these disabilities extended to three years imprisonment, with the deprivation of

every civil, and even personal, right. Could such laws, my Lord, have been carried into execution at this enlightened period? Would your Lordship have ventured to propose;—would the public have even borne their infliction? Is there a man of sense or liberality, who does not heartily rejoice at their repeal?

If the repeal of such laws was not called for by any recent instances of persecution; it was surely no less demanded by the improving spirit of the age. It was time, that, in pursuing the path of free enquiry, into the language and meaning of Scripture, our countrymen should be released, not only from the actual dread of persecution, but even from the *stigma* which such statutes were intended to affix. The laws of England, my Lord, however favorable to those views of Christianity, which your Lordship has adopted, have long allowed to others the free enjoyment of such worship and opinions as their own consciences approve. Since the revolution, among protestant dissenters, Unitarians alone have been excluded from this common pale; and have been obliged to accept from *connivance* those immunities, from which they were unjustly, though *legally*, debarred. The legislature, at last, has done them tardy justice; but it has done so with a unanimity which has merited and obtained their cordial thanks.

But upon what principle, my Lord, could this solitary exclusion have been any longer defended; upon what pretence could its removal have been any longer deferred? Why then, present yourself as an exception to the recent liberality of your order? Why continue to arraign as *blasphemers* and *apostates*, men whose motives, in adopting different views of religion, are at least as pure and as honorable as your own? The convictions of the understanding, you must surely know, are not to be compelled: force may indeed produce a seeming compliance for the moment; but it cannot long resist the progress of reason; or eventually stifle the expression of sentiments, which involve the present and the future happiness of a conscientious mind.

"Christianity", according to your Lordship's interpretation of it, may indeed be considered as "a part of the laws of England"; but its doctrines surely can derive no additional evidence from human laws. Otherwise the institutions of popery, and the religion of Mohammed, must have far stronger claims on general credence, from the legislative sanctions which they have respectively obtained. But "*The Bible, I say,*" in the language of Chillingworth, "*the Bible only is the religion of protestants.* Whatsoever else they believe besides *it*, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable consequences of *it*, well may they hold it as a matter

of opinion: but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption."*

Your Lordship must surely be aware, that all human laws originate either in the will of the majority, or in the mandate of the ruling powers: and, as neither kings nor people have any just claims to infallibility, their varying, but presumptuous, sanction can add nothing to the force of truth. The right of interference, which has been so generally assumed by kings and legislatures, is equally repugnant to nature and to reason, in a case where the duty of mankind, in their relation to the Deity alone, is involved. All such interference, on the part of the civil magistrate, is strictly foreign to his station, and has too often proved injurious to the Christian cause. But, whilst the legislative enactments of our own country still foster the prevailing system, they no longer authorize the charge of *blasphemy*, as applied to the believers *in one only God.*

Your Lordship admits that "the discovery of any insurmountable difficulties, in the doctrine of the Trinity, unknown to our ancestors, would

* Religion of Protestants a safe Way to Salvation: c. vi. § 56: see Chillingworth's Works, 9th edit. fol. 1727, p. 271.

have been some reason for repealing these statutes." And has the progress of biblical criticism, and of free enquiry, added nothing to the means of interpreting the sacred writings, which is not favorable to the prevailing creed? If this, my Lord, be really the case; if you stand thus prominently on the vantage ground of argument; if "the more your doctrines are investigated, the more clearly and fully their evidence is established",—why regret the repeal of these obsolete, these intolerant statutes? If your Lordship be so firmly convinced of the superiority of the cause you advocate, why degrade it by resorting to such feeble aid? Enter, my Lord, with zeal, once more, into the defence of your *peculiar* notions, and provoke your adversaries to the investigation of religious truth. But let us have argument, and not assertion; let your appeals to Scripture and to reason, supply the place of the statutes you deplore.

"To deny the essential doctrines of Christianity *may be* to deny the truth of Christianity", whilst it may still be open to enquiry, what those *essential doctrines* are. But it surely is not equally obvious, that any such denial is "subversive of *all religious truth* and *moral obligation*"; unless you are prepared to abandon the revelations of the *Old Testament*, and to explode the moral systems of the *Heathen world*. "The *existence of God*, as revealed to us in Scripture", is, no doubt, the

great foundation of the Christian scheme. On this point, among Christians of all denominations, no difference of opinion does or can exist. But what, my Lord, are those *essential doctrines*, the evidence of which, so clearly and so fully established by revelation, can yet require protection from the penal law? And what, on the other hand, are the tenets maintained by those supposed *blasphemers*, against whom such severe penalties have been hitherto in force?

Admitting then, that "the truth of Christianity consists in its essential doctrines; and the belief of it, in the admission of all that are founded on the authority of Scripture", let us consider what may be fairly deemed *essential doctrines*, and what proof you have adduced in their support. "The *existence* and *divinity* of *three persons in one God*", which you contend for, being no where explicitly revealed, I suspect can only be supported, in opposition to the clear and decisive testimony of Scripture, by the forced interpretation of a few passages, wrested from their context, or by others, whose authenticity is liable to dispute. "The plural form of *Elohim*, or the plural terms in the description of creation", are by no means decisive; since it is customary, in our own and other languages, to express a single meaning by a plural word. Kings and poets, in particular, have been apt to speak of themselves individually in

the same way. Nor are these, I believe, the only words in Scripture, where the Hebrew form is plural, though a single being only is implied. But did the Hebrews, my Lord, who surely must have known the purport of their own language, ever admit the idea of a plurality of persons in Jehovah; and have the Seventy translated *Elohim* by a plural word?

Nor is "the *separate existence* of *three divine persons*", more "evident, from our Saviour's commission to the apostles, to teach all nations, baptising them, in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit", Matthew xxviii. 20; since that commission refers solely to their being commanded to teach such doctrines, as originating in the Deity, were revealed by Christ, and confirmed by the manifestation of the power of God; there being no instance, in the *New Testament*, of its adoption as a baptismal form.* And as for the passage about "*three that bear record in heaven*", 1 John v. 7, to which your Lordship still ventures to "appeal without hesitation", it is really so destitute of authority from ancient manuscripts, so clearly and so obviously spurious, that the learning and ingenuity of Porson were scarcely necessary to detect the imposition.†

* See Blackburne's Works, Vol. I. p. lxxxv.—lxxxviii.

† See Marsh's translation of Michaelis's Introduction to the New Testament, with Notes and a Dissertation: vol. II. pt. II. p. 861.

If, then, "the separate existence of three divine persons" in the Deity, be no where explicitly revealed in Scripture, how can "their unity in one Godhead" be inferred "from their common attribute of *omnipresence*"; since that attribute, throughout the *sacred records*, is invariably ascribed to God alone. It is in vain, my Lord, that you decry the authority of reason in these matters; the fact is no less clearly against you: in the same Scriptures, which teach us that there is only *one God*, the sole creator and ruler of the universe, no distinct traces of your three omnipresent persons can be found.

But, my Lord, if the *doctrine of the Trinity* should be found not more devoid of "express authority", as an article of revelation, than repugnant to the "analogy and consistency of Scripture", on what basis can you rest your boasted scheme? To deny it, however, does by no means involve a denial of the *divinity of Christ*, or of his *pre-existence, creation and government of the world, inspiration of the prophets and apostles*, and *universal presence with his church*"; since all these tenets are as steadily maintained by the *Arians*, as by the most implicit believer in the *Athanasian creed*. The Unitarians, indeed, reject these doctrines as unfounded, and opposed to the clear and direct testimony of Scripture, that '*Jesus Christ was a man, the creature of God, and his delegated messenger and prophet.*'

The *distinct personality* of the holy spirit, and even its *agency*, except as it implies the power of God,* resting solely on the trinitarian hypothesis, may perhaps be involved in its denial; whilst the *atonement*, although generally rejected by Unitarians, otherwise than as *a reconciliation of mankind to God, through faith in Christ, and obedience to his precepts and example*, has no necessary connection with their leading views. But, notwithstanding the bold assertions in your Lordship's *Charge*, the rejection of such disputable dogmas, however it may affect the tenets of the church of England, is neither "to deny the truth of Christianity, nor to reject the authority of divine revelation": still less is it "to deprive the state of *any portion* of that influence of conscience and of moral principle, which may depend on their admission."

And now, my Lord, let us consider what are the *opinions*, which under the name of *blasphemy*, you arraign so vehemently; and who are the supposed *enthusiasts* and *levellers*, so long amenable to the penal law? The *existence of one God*, by whom all things were created; the *divine mission, death*, and *consequent resurrection of Christ*; the *divine authority of his precepts*, revealed in the Gospel; and *the hope of immortality* in the *resur-*

* The alteration in Dr. Paley's sentiments, which you allude to, respecting the *influence of the spirit*, as it appears in his *posthumous Sermons*, gives no sort of countenance to the trinitarian scheme.

rection of the dead; are the leading tenets maintained by Unitarians; the *essential doctrines* which they deduce from Scripture, as clearly and explicitly revealed. Such was the avowed faith of *Lardner*, the more than suspected creed of *Newton* and of *Locke:* such were the strictly scriptural conclusions, for which *Lindsey*, *Jebb*, and *Disney*, resigned their preferment in the church of England; and which were embraced, among dissenters, by *Simpson*, by *Priestley*, and by *Cappe*. And such, my Lord, if any additional authorities should still be wanting, were the doctrines openly espoused by the late *Duke of Grafton*, *Sir George Savile*, and *Attorney General Lee*. In these opinions, where does your Lordship find any appearance of *blasphemy;* among such men, where would you have selected a proper subject for the penal law? Away then with all idle lamentation about the repeal of *statutes*, so totally inapplicable and absurd; which, although, at times, they might give sanction to an unjust, illiberal *stigma*, affording "no proof of the tolerant spirit", could have conferred neither credit nor security on the established church.

It was not so much the progress of *unitarian sentiments*, however ably illustrated by successive enquirers, that called for the repeal of these statutes, as the increasing liberality of the public mind. Your Lordship may declaim against what

you deem "the insidious arts of Socinian and infidel innovation", but the progress of free enquiry can no longer be impeded in this country; the sacred rights of conscience can no longer be openly infringed. It is in vain that you invoke the aid of penal laws, to check the necessary consequence of those principles, on which you vindicate your own secession from the church of Rome. Your first principle, that *the Bible, and the Bible only is the religion of protestants*, has been too extensively diffused, to allow a co-ordinate authority to any human articles or creeds. Our ancestors, at the reformation, accomplished a great, though necessarily an imperfect work: but the importance of their services must be estimated, rather by the example which they set us, and the principles which they boldly asserted, than by any of the *dogmas* which they rashly ventured to prescribe. "In that æra", to use the language of one of your own dignitaries, Dr. Peckard, late dean of Peterborough, and master of Magdalen college, Cambridge, "neither the genius of Christianity was so well understood, nor its spirit of diffusive benevolence so well comprehended; neither its abhorrence of all tyranny over the conscience of man so clearly seen, nor the sacred and absolute authority of the Scriptures so well ascertained; neither the necessary proficiency in human literature so far extended, nor the laws of critical examination

so well defined, as they have been by the industry of learned men since that important period."*

Of these advantages, my Lord, the Unitarians have availed themselves, in their enquiries after the *essential principles* of Christianity; and, although differing in their conclusions, they are warranted, by the example of the first reformers, in refusing to bow to any human authority in points of faith. In the freedom of their enquiries, they have also the express sanction of one of the brightest ornaments of the church of England. "We ought to promote and encourage the advancement of religious knowledge", said Dr. Lowth to his clerical brethren, from a pulpit which you, my Lord, I know, have frequently ascended, "and the only mean, by which it can be advanced, freedom of enquiry.—It is of the utmost importance to the cause of true religion, that it be submitted to an open and impartial examination; and every disquisition concerning it have its free course; that even the malice of its enemies should have its full scope, and try its utmost strength of argument against it.—Let no one lightly entertain suspicions of any serious proposal for the advancement of religious knowledge; nor, out of unreasonable prejudice, endeavour to obstruct any enquiry that professes to aim at the further illustration of the great scheme of the Gospel in general, or the re-

* See Subscription; or Historical Extracts, 1776: p. 157.

But upon what principle, my Lord, could this solitary exclusion have been any longer defended; upon what pretence could its removal have been any longer deferred? Why then, present yourself as an exception to the recent liberality of your order? Why continue to arraign as *blasphemers* and *apostates*, men whose motives, in adopting different views of religion, are at least as pure and as honorable as your own? The convictions of the understanding, you must surely know, are not to be compelled: force may indeed produce a seeming compliance for the moment; but it cannot long resist the progress of reason; or eventually stifle the expression of sentiments, which involve the present and the future happiness of a conscientious mind.

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great foundation of the Christian scheme. On this point, among Christians of all denominations, no difference of opinion does or can exist. But what, my Lord, are those *essential doctrines*, the evidence of which, so clearly and so fully established by revelation, can yet require protection from the penal law? And what, on the other hand, are the tenets maintained by those supposed *blasphemers*, against whom such severe penalties have been hitherto in force?

Admitting then, that "the truth of Christianity consists in its essential doctrines; and the belief of it, in the admission of all that are founded on the authority of Scripture", let us consider what may be fairly deemed *essential doctrines*, and what proof you have adduced in their support. "The *existence* and *divinity* of *three persons in one God*", which you contend for, being no where explicitly revealed, I suspect can only be supported, in opposition to the clear and decisive testimony of Scripture, by the forced interpretation of a few passages, wrested from their context, or by others, whose authenticity is liable to dispute. "The plural form of *Elohim*, or the plural terms in the description of creation", are by no means decisive; since it is customary, in our own and other languages, to express a single meaning by a plural word. Kings and poets, in particular, have been apt to speak of themselves individually in

description. The excellent bishop of Norwich is understood to have been avowedly a friend to the BILL for the relief of Unitarians; and, had that BILL been opposed in its progress through the House of Lords, would, I doubt not, have spoken in its support. And the venerable bishop of Landaff, though long retired from all active interference in the discussions of the legislature, could not have failed to concur in a measure so congenial to his liberal views. "Freedom of enquiry", he observed, many years ago, "in this country, has eventually been of great service to the cause of Christianity.—The effect of established systems in obstructing truth, is to the last degree deplorable.—Truth every man must endeavour to investigate for himself; and, ordinarily speaking, he will be most successful in his endeavours, who examines with candour and care, what can be urged on each side of a greatly controverted question.—If different men, in carefully and conscientiously examining the Scriptures, should arrive at different conclusions, even on points of the last importance, we trust that God, who alone knows what every man is capable of, will be merciful to him that is in error.——*Newton* and *Locke* were esteemed *Socinians*, *Lardner* was an avowed one: *Clarke* and *Whiston* were declared *Arians*; *Bull* and *Waterland* were professed *Athanasians*: who will take upon him to say that these men were not equal to each other in probity

and scriptural knowledge? And if that be admitted, surely we ought to learn no other lesson, from the diversity of their opinions, except that of perfect moderation and good will towards all those who happen to differ from ourselves. We ought to entertain no other wish, but that every man may be allowed, without loss of fame or fortune, *et sentire quæ velit, et quæ sentiat dicere.* This absolute freedom of enquiry, it is apprehended, is the best way of investigating the sense of Scripture, the most probable mean of producing an uniformity of opinion, and of rendering the Gospel dispensation as intelligible to us in the eighteenth century, as we presume it was to the Christians in the first."* And again, in a letter to Mr. Wakefield, July 26, 1784, he says, "Whoever is afraid of submitting any question, civil or religious, to the test of free discussion, seems to me to be more in love with his own opinion than with truth."†

In these sentiments, my Lord, I most heartily and unreservedly concur; and, in remonstrating thus openly with your Lordship, on the very different principles maintained in your late *Charge to the Clergy of St. David's,* I am actuated by no feelings inconsistent with Christian charity and good will. The time, I trust, is fast approaching, when every remnant of intolerance shall be ex-

* See Theological Tracts: vol. I. Preface, and vol. VI. Appendix.

† See Memoirs of Gilbert Wakefield: vol. I. Appendix, p. 510.

punged, not only from our penal, but our civil code: when every man may worship God, according to the dictates of his own conscience, without exposing himself to any *stigma* or *deprivation* whatsoever; and when the only competition between *protestants* and *papists*, between *dissenters* and *churchmen*, may be, who shall best inculcate the genuine benevolence of the Gospel, and advance the welfare of the human race. In their zeal for the promotion of these essential duties, Unitarians have not hitherto yielded to any of their Christian brethren: in virtue and knowledge they at least are equal; in candour and liberality perhaps superior to the most. Be more just and generous then, my Lord, in your conclusions, and, tempering your zeal with discretion, admit the benevolent spirit of the Gospel, among the *essentials* of the Christian scheme. Ceasing to arraign Unitarians as *apostates* and *blasphemers*, endeavour to emulate their conduct, in inculcating the moral precepts of religion, as the firmest barriers of the church and state. And, leaving their supposed errors to the mercy of the SUPREME BEING, direct your chief attention to encourage the practice of virtue, to check the progress of corruption, and to discountenance every description of profligacy and vice.

August 25, 1814.

POSTSCRIPT.

Since my letter was in the press, I have seen your Lordship's *Brief Memorial*, in which, with even greater violence, you have renewed your very singular attack. But on this, as it has already received a full and satisfactory *Reply* from Mr. Belsham, in the *APPENDIX to a DISCOURSE, delivered, before the Unitarian Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, at Essex-Street Chapel, on Thursday, March* 31, 1814, *in commemoration of the repeal of the penal laws against the impugners of the doctrine of the Trinity*, it is not my intention to enlarge. You have, indeed, most effectually succeeded in rescuing yourself from any claim to the approbation, which has been bestowed on your episcopal brethren, for withholding their opposition to the *Unitarian Bill*. But in every other respect, my Lord, you have completely failed; unless it should be really your purpose, by provoking a full and fair discussion of the nature and object of the Christian revelation, to stimulate the advocates of free enquiry to new exertions, and eventually to promote the cause of truth. That this, at least, will be the effect of your recent publications, I cannot entertain a moment's doubt. Your professional rank, your learning,

and reputation, must of course excite attention, whilst your pretended demonstrations are feeble and inconclusive, and your arguments far better adapted to the state of Christendom in the twelfth century, or to the meridian of Spain at the present moment, than to the enlightened age and country in which we live. Well then may the friends of free enquiry, in all matters of importance, rejoice at your intemperate zeal; whilst your right reverend and clerical brethren, however they may agree with you in opinion on the leading question, must no less feelingly lament your want of judgment and discretion, as highly injurious to your cause.

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(11)

REMARKS

ON THE

BISHOP OF LINCOLN'S CHARGE,

DELIVERED TO THE CLERGY OF HIS DIOCESE

M DCCC XII.

BY JOHN DISNEY, D.D. F.S.A.

BATH, PRINTED AND SOLD BY RICHARD CRUTTWELL;

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M DCCC XII.

Price One Shilling and Sixpence.

REMARKS.

MY LORD,

THE honourable testimony which a noble earl very recently bore to your late charge, and the candid and ingenuous manner in which, by implication, he recommended it to my perusal in the course of a very short conversation, excited a serious and earnest desire to read, with all attention, your plea for the continuation of the incapacitating, therefore penal, laws against the roman catholics.

The question of catholic emancipation, which has been much agitated, and indeed very ably supported of late years, in repeated, but hitherto unsuccessful, applications to both houses of parliament, is confessedly of high importance, as it concerns their christian liberty ;—that liberty wherewith Christ hath alike made them, and the whole christian world, free. It also concerns the political energies of our executive government, and the consequences which the pending decision of the legislature may have on the continued good understanding between Great Britain and the united kingdom of Ireland.

It has been held, and well maintained, from the days of Mr. Locke, by several succeeding, very able, and well-principled friends of liberty, that civil government has a just and equitable claim upon its subjects for sufficient security of their allegiance, in return for the protection they receive. In other words, that the coronation oath taken by the king, and the oath of allegiance taken by the subject, are reciprocally binding on each. I am no way disposed to controvert this sentiment, but to admit it as an axiom, and to consider protection and allegiance to be agreed duties obligatory on each contracting party.

It is, my lord, an apostolical injunction, "let every man be fully "persuaded in his own mind;" and it is a rule founded on similar authority,—to take heed and "judge "not another man's servant." And I scarcely need observe that charity, true christian charity for each other, which hopeth all things, believeth all things, is the very bond of peace, the foundation and source of every valuable christian attainment. Without this attainment, every christian grace and virtue shall fail us, and become no better than the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal.

We must not forget, my lord, the ground of our protestant claims and

pretensions, and the only defensible principles of the reformation, the right of private judgment, and the consequent right to the full exercise of it without prejudice to the state, by any act of overt hostility: for concealed suspicions, and secret accusations, do not constitute an adequate cause for commencing any proceedings either of positive, or negative, penal laws. We should further recollect ourselves, for we both claim to be protestants, and it would be doubly reprehensible in a protestant church, whether only tolerated, or established, by law, to act upon the intolerant principles against which, in their own case, they severally and

solemnly dissented or protested. It would be the master-piece of inconsistency in principle, and of reproach in practice; it would shake the whole fabric of the reformation.

In your first prefatory page, my lord, you say, "no one can be a "greater friend than you are to "toleration, properly so called:" that you "consider it as a mark of "the true church, as a principle re-"cognized by the most eminent of "our reformers and divines. But "that you contend, that the roman "catholics are already in complete "possession of religious toleration. "What they now demand is political "power,—a species of political power

"which, in your judgment, could
"not be granted without extreme
"hazard to our constitution in church
"and state."

I give you, my lord, full credit for the truth of this statement of your respect for toleration; but the description of the case to be tolerated might involve further discussion, and some difference of opinion, without any intentional blame attaching to either of us. Toleration without allowing any capability of enjoying civil power, is to permit a man to live indeed, but to render life a burden, by tying his hands and feet; it is setting upon him a mark of jealousy, if not of disgrace, and bidding

him to wear his badge of humiliation in the face of his neighbours.

Besides, though toleration has been held to be the consistent language of every protestant church, and of an illustrious race of our ablest protestant writers, and ought to have been the language of every church professing itself christian, yet toleration, "properly so called," as that word, in its most extensive and liberal sense imports, is infinitely short of the true christian principle,—that no christian should hold his christian liberty at the will of another. The term, therefore, though it has long passed as of sterling value, is, in truth, of very questionable autho-

rity, and of very suspicious tendency. It expresses the dependence of one man upon another to do a particular act, in which that other has no right to interfere, directly or indirectly, by compulsion or seduction.

Your lordship's definition of toleration is sufficiently correct; for it at once faithfully represents the term as we understand it, and sufficiently exposes to just reprehension every idea conveyed by it. "Toleration," you say, "is a permission, under the "authority of law, to every indivi-"dual to profess the religious opinions "which he conceives most consonant "to scripture, and to worship God "in the manner most agreeable to

"the dictates of his conscience," (p. 12.) To be permitted to hold and exercise these rights under protection of law, does honour to the civil government, considering the limited state to which society is advanced; but these should not even now be clogged with one unnecesary restraint; for when the tenure is unquestionably vicious, and the result only of power previously obtained, it has no pretension to any other defence than an apology for the obtrusion. Toleration is a great good, as far as it goes; but there is wanting "something more than toleration in "this kingdom," (p. 13,) and indeed in every christian country.

We confessedly owe much to Mr. Locke—more, probably, than to any other individual person; not merely for his very masterly "Letters on "Toleration," but for his having eventually, through the progress of time, shewn the insufficiency of that toleration for which those letters so powerfully plead. In America, the christian principle is practically adopted, I understand, throughout that western continent. Every congregation and every individual there are placed independently of each other; and I am not apprised of any civil inconvenience likely to follow the establishment of this extent of religious liberty. Its most prominent

tendency and effect is to produce harmony and good-will among all men. This extent of christian liberty will, I am persuaded, most essentially subserve the cause of revealed truth, and before all other means, preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; and most effectually supersede all that "vigilance and caution" which you apprise your clergy will otherwise be required of them. The church of Christ will prevail against the powers of this world, however it may be compelled to pass through evil report and good report; and as I am persuaded that no religious tests will add to its security, so I am likewise convinced, that though they

may impede its progress, and, for a time, corrupt its profession, they cannot destroy it. The short-sighted policy of man frequently, for a season, destroys the end which he has in view, but never can ultimately defeat the purpose of God.

You state, my lord, that "general irreligion and avowed depravity "characterize the present age; and" that "bitter are the fruits they "produce." (p. 9.) I believe such statement to be founded in truth; but, if it proves any thing to your purpose in our present question, it proves that religious tests, penal laws, and legal incapacities, have not accomplished their promised good

effects, but probably have weakened the impressions and influence of religion on the morals of mankind. It is equally probable that the very profession of religion in simplicity and godly sincerity would have had a more benign effect on all the different denominations of christians, in the exercise of mutual confidence in, and harmony with, each other.

You tell us, that you "have never "regarded the roman catholic ques-"tion solely in a political light;" (p. 10.) But I had understood in the course of reading your charge, that you renounced any desire to interfere with the faith of the catholic in a ~~religious light~~. ~~The religious faith~~

religious light. The religious faith of the catholic, independent of political connection, makes no part of your charge as such.

The religious animosities preceding, and immediately succeeding, the Revolution, apparently constituted the great struggles between protestants and catholics: both were eager in their own pursuit beyond any justifying cause,—former wounds were not healed, and, therefore, every touch irritated the catholic, who mourned a dying cause, and the protestant was impatient to exercise his newly-acquired ascendancy. But there were various other causes of disturbance subsisting, which would

more correctly explain the evils deplored, than by involving religious differences on every occasion. The love of arbitrary power in the whole house of Stuart will of itself account for enough of the then existing political evils, without our pressing popery into the service. The pusillanimity of James I. the hypocrisy of the first Charles, the profligacy of the second of that name, and the lust of arbitrary dominion, united indeed with religious bigotry, in James II. will remove much blame from popery, the stalking-horse during the greater part of the two latter of those reigns.

But you still proceed, my lord, and say, "Let us suppose, that there had

"been no test-laws, no disabling
"statutes, in the year 1745, when
"an attempt was made to overthrow
"the protestant government, and to
"place a popish sovereign upon the
"throne of these kingdoms; and let
"us suppose, that the leading men
"in the houses of parliament, that
"the ministers of state, and the
"commanders of our armies, had then
"been papists; will any one contend,
"that that formidable rebellion, sup-
"ported as it was by a foreign ene-
"my, would have been resisted with
"the same zeal, or suppressed with
"the same facility, as when all the
"measures were planned and executed
"by sincere protestants?" (p. 15.)

I am prompt to make you, my lord, the reply you look for, but not accompanied with the concession you may expect. Most probably the rebellion would not have been resisted with such zeal, or suppressed with such facility, and I should deeply have grieved at my country's subjugation. But to excuse your very supposition, you should have further supposed the community, or nine tenths of the community, to have been catholics, on which united suppositions the case would have become quite altered.

But to meet your supposition in your own way, I will reply to you in the words of Dr. Samuel Butler,

in a note to his sermon before the university of Cambridge at the last commencement. "In the reigns of "George I. and George II. we were "twice invaded by a catholic claim-"ant of the crown, protected and "supported by catholic powers. It "was, therefore, but natural that some "jealousy should be felt towards the "catholic subjects of the reigning "prince." But Dr. Butler then adds, "These rebellions, however, cannot "be considered as connected with "religion. The *protestant* non-jurors "of Scotland were infinitely more "forward in them than the catholics, "a great portion of whom offered to "take up arms against the pretender,

" and *all Ireland*, in 1745, was quies-
" cent. Lord Chesterfield even sent
" some regiments from thence to
" assist the duke of Cumberland."†

But, my lord, you still insist that
" not to be allowed to sit in parlia-
" ment, to fill the great offices of
" state, to preside in our courts of
" justice or equity, or to command
" our army or navy, are the only
" disabilities now remaining; and
" that it is material to observe that
" they do not in the slightest degree

† See a Sermon preached at St, Mary's, before his royal highness the duke of Gloucester, chancellor of the university, and the university of Cambridge, at the installation, June 30, 1811, pp. 62, 63. Published by Deighton, Cambridge.

"infringe the true principles of to-
"leration," (p. 11 and 12.)

Your lordship bears honourable and deserved testimony that "too "much cannot be said in praise of "the cheerful obedience and un-"daunted bravery of those of our "popish fellow-subjects, who have "engaged in the service of their "country," (p. 14.) But you question the conclusion, that "because "papists are good soldiers and sailors, "they would be honest and faithful "ministers of state." Indeed the conclusion would be somewhat illogical: soldiers and sailors, though they may not make "honest and "faithful ministers of state," may

make skilful and brave generals and admirals. But the advantages of education should seem generally to give a preference to some before others, except in very extraordinary cases. We have heard of a heaven-born minister, why, therefore, may not a heaven-born general or admiral arise once or twice in a century. Would it not be a very ungenerous and undeserved return for any eminently distinguished services of our soldiers and sailors, to preclude them from the most desirable reward of their military and naval conduct,—their advancement in their profession? Might it not eventually deprive our country of the services of some men

possessing the first abilities that offer for its protection? Generals have risen from the ranks; and it has not always happened that better educated and more accomplished commanders have vanquished them.

Your lordship puts the question with reference to private life with some confidence. "Does any one "employ, in his private concerns, "those whom he thinks disaffected "to his interest, who he knows "would rejoice in his disgrace and "ruin?" (p. 15 and 16.) But this is begging the question: such faithless men are not proscribed for their religion, but for their personal prejudice and unfitness. It is the eligibility

to employment, and the supposed competency to it, not the actual and unconditional employment of the catholics, for which I contend. It would be a very discouraging circumstance to a newly ordained deacon or priest in the church of England, and he would sensibly feel such degradation, to be authoritatively declared incapable of ever obtaining a deanery or a bishoprick, though very few succeed to either. To say; curate you are, and curate you must remain, would soon break an ingenuous spirit, and disqualify him for discharging the duties of his ministry with any benefit to his flock, or any credit to himself.

Your distinction, my lord, between the exclusion from power, and persecution, appears to go beyond what the premises will admit. "Exclusion "from power," you say, "is entirely "negative in its operation,—it only "declares, that those who hold cer-"tain opinions shall not fill certain "situations; but it acknowledges "men to be perfectly free to hold "those opinions," (p. 17.) In the same spirit of liberty, a Spanish gentleman argued with me, some years ago, though he had himself then recently escaped the inquisition. He insisted much on the portion of religious liberty enjoyed in his country, and illustrated his position by stating

that any one might *think* as he pleased in Spain. It was observed in reply, that it afforded very humble proof of the religious liberty enjoyed in Spain, that one might only do that which no human power could prevent, and that few Englishmen would be satisfied without the liberty of speaking or writing what they thought, so that they did not offend against the laws of God, or the reasonable laws of man. "Then, sir," said he, "I would not advise such English-" man to go to Madrid." His advice had been anticipated, and, I scarcely need to add, was wholly unnecessary.

In further reply to the ease with which you speak, my lord, of nega-

tive persecution, let it be observed, that it *may* be rendered as fatal as positive persecution. "The axe and "the halter," says Mrs. Macaulay, in the conclusion of her character of Strafford, if my memory does not deceive me, "are noble specifics to "excite pity and compassion:" and effect their purpose with less suffering to the wretched patient, than the witholding all sustenance, and leaving exhausted nature to languish, and to die. Both patients are deprived of life,—one by a more expeditious, the other by a more slow, more cruel, and not less certain process.

You superadd, that "exclusion "from power prescribes no faith,"

(p. 17.) True, my lord, but it greatly tempts the excluded party to prevaricate with his conscience, and renounce his faith,—rather to temporize than burn. A temptation may sometimes take precedence of a threat: and conformity is the watch-word,—the honest mind keeps his place, but the state gains the hypocrite, and is unwise enough to be proud of, and to confide in, the victim of a bribe.

Besides, my lord, exclusion from power argues distrust in the first instance. And incapacitation is avowedly to withold all confidence, all honour, and all honourable emolument, about which even very good men are not always wholly indifferent.

"Exclusion from power is founded," you say, "in the natural and rational "principle of self-protection and self-"preservation," (p. 17.) But this foundation may be the result of suspicion, or of prejudice, which should be corrected by subsequent history or knowledge. On your presumption, my lord, it may have a better origin, but, though "entirely "negative in its operation," it may be as effectual in humiliating the excluded, and therefore the aggrieved, party. The same presumption may be abused in other hands. 'I will not spill thy blood,' said a man, displeased with his dog, 'but I will hold thee under the water till thou dost depart this life.'

"History does, indeed, amply in-
"form us of the mischievous and
"fatal effects of persecution," (p. 17.)
but its evidence of the "expediency
"and necessity of the exclusion
"from power," as applied to the
catholics of our time, is neither de-
cisive, nor clear. There have been
some rare instances, I do not deny,
of the expediency of this exclusion
from power. But it has not been
unfrequent for profligate politicians,
who had some bye-end to serve, to
throw the mantle of religion over
their own misdeeds, or to blend them
with matters unconnected with, and
even foreign to, their plots and
stratagems.

Your extract from Mr. Fox's History affects more the individual characters of the men entrusted with power in the reign of James II. than our proper question. We have seen individuals in our own day entrusted with power, who, though no catholics, through unbounded ambition and self-conceit, a lust of power and of patronage, have only succeeded in laying low the security, if not the existence, of our country; whose monument is the present prostrate state of the national character, defence, commerce, and finance; the reduced state of the liberty of the press, and the continued degraded state of

representation, as was evident in the last parliament.

When you attempt, my lord, to reflect on the friends and admirers of the revolution, you are scarcely aware that some of its warmest admirers admit many exceptions to their plaudits of that otherwise proud æra of England. The funding system, and septennial parliaments, were two measures which were introduced and warmly supported by the whigs, under the profligate plea of state necessity; and, at this instant, are the two great instruments which have enabled the successive ministers of the crown to corrupt the legislature; and do they not threaten,

finally, but progressively, to seal the extinction of all that is dear to the spirit of an Englishman.

Pensionary Fagel's Letter to Mr. Stewart in 1687, is a letter that applies more to the then state of parties than to general principles. And should the two declarations of James II. contain the arguments used at this day for the abolition of the test laws, I may also safely presume that your lordship's arguments for the continuance of them are not entirely original. Without meaning to charge your lordship with plagiarism, I apprehend it is no more than natural to suppose that neither you, nor myself,

are singular in our notions or expressions on the present subject.

I have been traditionally told of a certain general, who, on being discharged from shooting on some neighbouring manors, in the reign of Queen Anne, broke forth into vehement wrath, expressed in very reprehensible language, on the hardship of *his* being debarred from killing a hare or a partridge, who had been fighting all his life for the protestant religion. You may argue, my lord, for toleration to the end of time, but if you will for ever lean to certain ancient prejudices, the party said to be tolerated may revel among the hares and partridges without de-

riving much pleasure or satisfaction from his diversion.

Upon the question of supremacy, I suspect, my lord, that you attach more importance than is due to it. The church-government of the catholics, I understand, they keep among themselves; and though they do not admit the protestant claim of supremacy, they do in no wise interfere with it. Neither am I aware of any practical use they could make of the pope's supposed supremacy, for which they contend, that would be *bona fide* hostile to the protestant civil government. When the brow of Henry the eighth was honoured by the pope with the title of 'Defender

'of the Faith,'—"Would it not have "been better," said some one near his person, "for your majesty to dis-"charge the duties of royalty, and "leave the faith to defend itself?"

It is my fervent wish that the catholics had acceded to the proposed *veto* in 1808; the concession would have tended to the amicable conclusion of the question, without more offence than adding another precedent of the occasional interruption of the pope's nomination or approbation of the prelacy. It evinces, and, I think you admit their sincerity, if they have any attachment to their own independence in this matter; and I do not conceive that it neces-

sarily impeaches their allegiance in things civil. How that can be considered as an *imperium in imperio*, which has no necessary connection or interference with government, I cannot discern.

It is an hard saying, my lord, and very indifferently warranted by the premises, that " that no credit is due " to the assertion, that the papists of " the present day are different from " the papists of former times, (p. 23.) I think it is Hume, who somewhere observes, that " priests of all religions " are the same." This is to deprive every different religious persuasion of its individual and distinct influence upon character; and I am willing to

persuade myself that it is a proposition, against which you will protest, as readily as myself. Let not then even the church of Rome be charged with more than belongs to her. Besides, may we not suppose, that the attachment to the spiritual supremacy of the pope may conscientiously abide with the papist, as well as transubstantiation. And the avowal of it, in the instant of petitioning, is at least an answer to the supposed disguised character of the catholic.

Dr. Samuel Butler, of Shrewsbury, has given very ample extracts from some modern publications of the catholics, which will convince any reasonable mind of their improvement in

all matters of civil policy. Nor would I wish to overloook "the substance "of the speech of Sir John Cox "Hippisley, bart. in the house of "commons on May 18, 1810;" and "the very copious and very judicious "selection of most important and "convincing documents in the ap-"pendix and supplement to that "publication," already recommended by Dr. S. Butler; or the speeches of the bishop of Norwich in the house of lords in 1808, 1810, and 1811, on the catholic question, "the perusal "of which," very justly observes the same learned and liberal divine, "cannot fail to gratify every feeling,

"every learned, and every christian "writer."

These recommendations deserve and will repay the gentle labour of reference; to neglect it, would be, in the candid inquirer, to commit an act of injustice to his own character.

Your argument to prove that "the "doctrines and principles of the "papists have undergone no alter-"ation," (p. 24,) adduced from the book published by authority, for the use of the students at Maynooth college, from Mr. Plowden, or Dr. Troy, will not, I suspect, answer the purpose for which you produce them; the counter authorities announced by Dr. S. Butler, and Sir J. Cox Hippis-

ley, trespass indeed on their unanimity, and, if I am not mistaken, will sufficiently establish the intention for which they are introduced. But I understood, that upon this subject even Mr. Pitt himself acknowledged to have received very satisfactory documents from certain foreign universities, of their having renounced the offensive principles of former times.

If, my lord, the "Letters" of Peter Plymley, on the subject of catholic emancipation, should have escaped your notice, I think I do not hazard any credit, either with you, or with any scholar or gentleman in recommending the perusal of them, for

containing more true wit, blended with serious argument, than has been given to the world since the days of Swift.

You say, my lord, that it is "expressly asserted," sufficiently uncharitably to be sure, "that there is "no salvation out of the pale of the "romish church," (p. 55.) But, my lord, what then shall be said for that protestant church which imposes on its members a creed, which declares, in its second clause, that "except "every one do keep it whole and "undefiled, without doubt he shall "perish everlastingly:" and which concludes no less peremptorily, "this "is the catholic faith: which except

" a man believe faithfully, he cannot " be saved." I need not, my lord, be told of your own liberal principles on the continued use of this creed; but, my lord, it remains unremoved.

It has, indeed, been reported of some charitable, but simple, advocate for the Athanasian creed, as it is called, that on being reminded of the harshness and severity of this dogma, framed his answer in a very ill-constructed apology for himself; " We " do not mean," replied he, " that " the man shall certainly perish ever- " lastingly, or that he absolutely " cannot be saved,—we only hope so."

The representation of the confined effect of the liberty requested, " to a

"few of the richer and higher orders" of the catholics, is a plea for such concession, in proportion as it reduces the importance of the question. And if the many are ruled by the few, the policy of the measure is the same; remembering, however, that the patronage of place and pension would remain with the protestant government.

The consideration of the great majority of the subjects of Ireland being catholics, seems to have escaped your lordship's notice; for on the doctrine of the far-famed Alliance, popery should be the established religion of Ireland, as presbyterianism is of Scotland. And the protestants of Ireland should be the suitors for

toleration, not the dictators and imposers of tests.

With a view to suggest how fruitless any concession would be towards satisfying the expectations of the catholics, you say, "Let it be re-
"membered, that the concessions in
"1793 were far more extensive in
"their operation, and therefore more
"likely to cause general satisfaction,
"and to excite gratitude among pa-
"pists at large, than the grant of the
"claims now urged would be." (p. 26.) But does it necessarily follow, that because parliament, in 1793, regarded the petitions, and relieved the population of Ireland,—the present application, which comprised

the remaining catholic members of the community, " a few of the richer " and higher orders," was therefore not likely to answer the purpose of conciliation? In other words, that because they were not conclusively satisfied when part were relieved, they consequently would remain dissatisfied when the whole were? At the same time, your lordship also loses sight of the great influence you had before stated that the higher catholic clergy had over the lower members of their order, and indeed over the catholic population.

The rebellion in Ireland in 1798, Mr. Pitt is said " to have repeatedly " declared in parliament, *could not*

" *be considered as a catholic rebellion*;
" the Irish press teemed with ad-
" dresses, declarations, exhortations,
" remonstrances, pastoral letters, and
" even excommunications, from the
" catholic bishops and clergy, *to the*
" *lower orders of people of their per-*
" *suasion*, all tending to inculcate
" loyalty to the reigning sovereign,
" and *expressive of their determination*
" [their own words] *to stand or fall*
" *with the present* happy constitution.
" The sentence of excommunication
" against all rebels was appointed *to*
" *be distinctly read and enforced at*
" *each mass on the Sunday next after*
" *the receipt of it*, is expressed in the

" strongest and most unequivocal lan-
" guage possible."*

I trust that you will forgive me, my lord, if I relate an anecdote of that mild and amiable man, Ganganelli, while he wore the tiara under the name of Clement XIV.; an anecdote that does honour to the magnanimity and gentleness of his temper, and may contribute, in a reflecting mind, to bear down some of those sharp and ill-founded prejudices to which we are all liable.—In the course of an interview which an English gentleman had with the pope

* See Dr. S. Butler's Notes to his Sermon, p. 83; who adds; " which" documents, [" addresses, &c.] are now " on the table before me."

at Rome, he enquired of the traveller the rout he had come, which introduced his mentioning that he had visited Voltaire at Ferney, and, indeed, had charge of a message from that philosopher to his holiness. If he would be pleased to permit him, he would deliver it in the words in which he had received it. The gentleman said that Voltaire had charged him with his very best respects to his holiness, and requested, as a great favour, that he would send him the eyes and ears of his inquisitor general. "Ah!" replied the pope, "the old man has a mind to "be pleasant; and, sir, if you return "the same way, be pleased to deliver

" to him my best respects, and assure
" him, if it had been practicable, I
" would readily have obliged him,
" but the inquisitor general of Rome
" has had neither eyes nor ears since
" Ganganelli has been pope."

I think, my lord, you will excuse this digression, if a digression it may be called.

The state of my health, my lord, might well have spared me the effort of writing the present remarks on your lordship's charge to the clergy of your diocese, in which I was formerly beneficed. I knew, and greatly respected, several of the clergy, and while I resided among them, and after my resignation of my pre-

ferment, received from them all kindness and attention,—though I conscientiously seceded from the communion of the established church, to worship the God of my fathers in the way which some call "heresy." On the present occasion, I felt too much interested to look with indifference on a subject which immediately involved the liberty of professing the gospel of Christ. This conviction prompted me to contribute my feeble endeavours in this most unwelcome labour of love: and I as fervently hope that my manner of treating my subject, and your lordship, the patron of the existing laws hostile to the emancipation of the catholics, has

not betrayed any infirmity inconsistent with the character of a christian or a gentleman. It has beguiled some hours of pain, and will, I hope, afford me satisfaction in the days that may be yet to come, be they few or many. If I have failed in my purpose of removing some of your lordship's difficulties and discouragements to the freer profession of religion, I still trust that the cause of liberty will not have suffered any detriment in my hands. I profess to contend for truth and liberty, not for victory; and, if I am defeated, I shall content myself, under my full persuasion of the rectitude of my intention, of which nothing can de-

prive me. Should I hereafter see reason to change my opinions, I hope I shall be equally ready to retract any error, either in principle or policy, into which I may have fallen.

I am, my lord,

&c. &c.

Bath, Nov. 17, 1812.

Printed by Richard Cruttwell,
St. James's-Street, Bath.

ERRATUM.

Page 17, strike out the top line.

SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

LIVERPOOL

Unitarian Tract Society,

1st July, 1819.

In again laying before their Christian Brethren, the state of this Society, the Committee are desirous of calling the attention of the Friends of free religious investigation, to the principles and objects which led to its establishment, and on which it rests its claims to support.

The general diffusion of the blessings of education among all classes of Society, encourages the hope that the time is arriving when a greater zeal for the knowledge of the genuine doctrines of Scripture may be expected to shew itself. The desire for information has already been extended in a considerable degree to this important point, and it remains for the advocates of uncorrupted Christianity to promote its progress by the distribution of Books and Tracts best calculated to lead to just conceptions of the Attributes of the Deity, and of the Nature and Objects of the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah.

To understand the true intent and meaning of the Sacred Writings, must undoubtedly be a consideration superior to every other, since in them, we have been instructed to look for the guide of our conduct, and to them are we indebted for a well grounded hope of a future and immortal life.

Such being our convictions, we think we cannot more wisely fulfil the ends for which our creator designed us, than by using our utmost endeavors to exterminate the corruptions which have crept into the pure religion of Jesus, and to remove the erroneous views which have in consequence obtained so great an influence over the minds of professing christians.

In thus exciting a spirit of free and unprejudiced inquiry into subjects so interesting to accountable beings, let it be

remembered that no investigation is of real utility which has not for its first principle and ultimate object the discovery of TRUTH. With this for our stimulus and guide, at whatever conclusions we may arrive, the growth of Piety and Virtue must eventually be cherished and promoted. Nor let it be supposed that we are desirous only of the increase of a sect or party, for however we may rejoice in the diffusion of those views which we think the Apostles and primitive Christians entertained, we are ever ready to respect the diligent inquirer after Truth, even though he may be widely separated from us, in following what he conscientiously believes to be her decisions. We are at variance only with the bigot, who condemns the opinions of his neighbour without taking the trouble to ascertain their Truth or Falsehood; and if we have occasion for regret, it is, when we are unable to convince those of our brethren who agree with us in sentiment, of the claim that is made upon them, to co operate in the important work of spreading the Gospel, as originally preached by Jesus Christ and his Apostles. To such persons, we would address ourselves in the language of Christian exhortation, and in the words of Paul to the Corinthians: "*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*"

A reference to the Cash and Stock Accounts, will shew the progress and present state of the Society, and the Committee are happy in having been enabled to extend its benefits, gratis, in many instances where they have reason to believe the best results have followed. Opportunities of usefulness have also been embraced, by the distribution of Tracts among our poorer brethren in one or two neighbouring places, as well as a donation of the Improved Version of the New Testament and a few other Books, applied for from Calcutta, in the East Indies.

The Committee cannot close their Report without again calling on their brethren to make renewed efforts to add to the Funds of the Society, satisfied that the cause of pure Christianity will in no way be better promoted than by the distribution of Books, without the aid of which, knowledge, the best safeguard of Truth, can be but imperfectly acquired.

Dr. *The Liverpool Unitarian Tract Society, in Cash and Stock Account.* *Cr.*

				£.	s.	d.
To Amount paid for Books, viz.						
The Unitarian Society, (*London.*)	27	5	4			
The Christian Tract Society (*Ditto*)	7	18	3			
R. Hunter.....(*Ditto*)	14	17	5			
Newcastle Tract Society	5	0	0			
F. B. Wright (*Liverpool*).....	11	12	0			
Rev. Geo. Harris (*Ditto*)	3	0	0			
W. Robinson & Sons (*Ditto*).....	2	18	4			
Rev. Mr. Platts (*Doncaster*)	2	0	0			
				74	11	4
Paid Printing and Stationery	4	10	0			
Carriage, Postage, &c.	1	15	0			
				6	5	0
Balance				12	3	0
				£ 92	19	4
Amount due to the Unitarian Society, (*London*).....	13	14	1			
Ditto to the Christian Tract Society, (*Ditto*)	3	12	0			
				17	6	1
Balance				37	12	2
				£ 54	18	3

Audited { G. Harris, F. B. Wright.

				£.	s.	d.
By Balance from last Report				10	7	10
Arrears of Subscriptions received..				5	2	6
141 Annual Subscriptions	61	11	6			
Deduct 9 in Arrear.....	3	15	0			
				57	16	6
Amount Received for Books sold..				19	12	6
				£ 92	19	4
Balance in hands of the Treasurer				12	3	0
Arrears due to the Society.....				3	15	0
Stock of Books and Tracts on hand, valued at one-sixth less than the Catalogue Prices ..				39	0	3
				£ 54	18	3
Balance in favour of the Society....				£ 37	12	2

5th July, 1819.

At the Second Annual Meeting of the Subscribers, held in Paradise Street Chapel,

REV. JOHN YATES, *in the Chair,*

the foregoing Report of the Committee, and the Treasurer's Accounts having been read, it was

Unanimously Resolved,

THAT they meet the cordial approbation of this Meeting, and are ordered to be printed, together with the list of Subscribers, the Catalogue, and Rules of the Society.

THAT the following Gentlemen, *Rev. James Parry, Mr. Eli Jagger, Mr. Wm. Lewthwaite, and Mr. Jevons,* be chosen as Members of the Committee, in lieu of the *Rev. J. Yates, Mr. Fletcher, Mr. Freme, and Mr. Roscoe,* who retire from office.

Committee for the Year.

REV. GEO. HARRIS, CHAIRMAN.

MR THOS. JEVONS, TREASURER.—MR. H TAYLOR, SECRETARY.

MR. ROGER HUNTER,
MR. ELI JAGGER,
L. J. JARDINE, M. D.
MR. JEVONS,
MR. WM. LEWTHWAITE,
MR. R. MUSGROVE,
REV. JAMES PARRY,
MR. F. B. WRIGHT,
MR. R. V. YATES.

Communications (post paid) may be addressed to the Secretary, MR. H. TAYLOR, 47, Bold Street. Subscriptions and Benefactions will be received by the Treasurer, or by any Member of the Committee.

Orders for Books or Tracts, may be left in the Committee Rooms of Paradise Street and Renshaw Street Chapels, where the Books, &c. will be delivered, and where the Laws and Catalogues of the Society may be had.

SIR,

You are requested to pay to the Treasurer, or to any member of the Committee, your Subscription to the LIVERPOOL UNITARIAN TRACT SOCIETY, which became due this day.

You are entitled to an allotment of Books to the amount of your Subscription, which is at your disposal, if claimed agreeably to the 4th, 5th, and 7th Laws of the Society.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

H. TAYLOR.

47, *Bold Street*, 1*st July*, 1819. *Secretary*.

RULES.

1. The Society shall be denominated The *Liverpool Unitarian Tract Society*.

2. The term *Unitarianism*, is used by the Society to denote the belief that the Father *alone* is God, and the *only* proper object of Religious Worship; and the Books or Tracts provided for circulation, shall be such only, as are consistent with that grand Truth, and conducive to the increase of Piety and Virtue.

3. The Society shall be supported by annual Subscriptions and Benefactions: every Subscriber of two shillings and six pence, or upwards, annually, shall be a Member, and be entitled to vote as soon as his Subscription is paid. All subscriptions shall be considered as due on the 1st of July every year, and will be understood to be continued annually, unless notice to the contrary be given to the Secretary.

4. Every Member shall be entitled to receive an annual allotment of Books or Tracts to the amount of his Subscription, at the prices marked in the Society's Catalogue: no one however shall receive any allotment while his Subscription is in arrear.

5. Each Subscriber shall, within three months from the annual Meeting, give to the Secretary, a list from the Catalogue, of such Books or Tracts, as he wishes to have for his allotment; after the expiration of which time no claim can be made, but the Books then remaining unclaimed, together with all such as are purchased with Funds arising from Donations, shall be at the disposal of the Committee.

6. Every Member shall be entitled to purchase any number of Books or Tracts from the Society, at the prices marked in the Catalogue, on paying for them at the time of delivery.

7. No Books or Tracts shall be delivered without a written order to the Secretary, which must be left in his hands as a voucher. Letters must be free of Postage, and all Books or Tracts be taken away without expense to the Society, but they will be forwarded to Subscribers residing at a distance, agreeably to their directions.

8. A Committee shall be appointed consisting of twelve Members, six from Paradise Street Congregation, and six from Renshaw Street Congregation, who shall choose from among themselves a Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Auditors. One third part of the Committee shall annually go out of Office.

9. A meeting of the Members shall be held on the first Monday in July in every year, alternately in Paradise Street and Renshaw Street Chapels, of which due notice shall be given, when a statement of the Funds and transactions of the Society for the past Year shall be laid before the Members, vacancies in the Committee shall be filled up, and other general business transacted.

10. The Chairman of the Committee shall preside at all Meetings of the Society, or in his absence some other Member of the Committee.

11. The Committee shall meet on the first Wednesday in every Month, or oftener if required, when four Members shall be competent to act, and their proceedings shall be entered in a Book to be kept by the Secretary.

12. The Committee shall have the selection or printing of the Books or Tracts, but any Member may propose for their consideration any Book or Tract that he may think proper.

13. A Catalogue of Books and Tracts, with the prices annexed, shall be prepared by the Committee, and any alterations or additions that may be made, shall be annually stated in the Report.

14. An extraordinary General Meeting may be called at any time, upon a Requisition signed by six Members, addressed to the Chairman of the Committee, of which Meeting due notice must be given, stating the business to be brought forward.

15. No Law can be made or repealed, but at a General Meeting: fourteen days notice of the intended alteration must be left with the Secretary, and in all cases the majority present shall decide.

Subscribers.

The Names of new Subscribers are printed in Italics.

	£.	s.	d.
A			
Avison Thomas	0	10	6
B			
Bancks Mrs.	1	1	0
Bennett Edward	0	3	0
Bolton Thomas	1	1	0
Booth George	1	1	0
Booth Henry	0	10	0
Broadbent Mrs.	1	0	0
Burraston James	0	10	6
Bywater John	0	5	0
C			
Carter J. S.	1	0	0
Clear John, *Cork*	0	10	6
Clifford Thomas	0	5	0
Corbet William	0	2	6
Corfe Joseph	0	5	0
Cox Edward	0	10	6
Cox George L.	0	10	6
D			
Davies Rev. J. *Waxertree*	0	10	0
Denman Miss	0	3	0
Durning William	0	10	0
E			
Eckersley James	0	10	6
Ellison Henry	0	10	0
Elton William	0	5	0
F			
Fairfield John	0	10	0
Finch John	0	5	0
Fletcher Thomas	0	10	0
Freme John R	1	0	0
Freme James	1	1	0
French Mrs.	1	0	0
Friend ℣ H. Taylor	0	10	0
Friend ℣ H. Ellison	0	5	0
Carried up	£16	15	6

	£.	s.	d.
Amount brought up	16	15	6
G			
Gaskell Miss	0	10	0
Gaskell Miss A.	0	10	0
Gibbons Timothy	0	10	0
Gill George	0	5	0
Gillibrand John	0	5	0
Gillmer Mrs	0	5	0
Guy John	0	5	0
Guy John, Jun.	0	3	0
H			
Hamilton R. William	1	0	0
Hancox Joseph	0	10	0
Harris Rev. Geo.	0	10	0
Harris James	0	10	0
Harvey William	1	0	0
Harvey John	0	10	0
Harvey James	1	0	0
Harvey Samuel	1	0	0
Harvey Enoch	1	0	0
Harvey Robert	0	10	0
Haslingden James	0	5	0
Hazledine John	0	5	0
Henry Daniel	0	10	0
Heywood Miss B	1	0	0
Houghton John H.	0	10	0
Hunter Roger	0	10	0
J			
Jagger Eli	0	10	0
Jagger Thomas	0	5	0
James Miss	0	10	0
James Miss C.	0	10	0
Jardine L. J. *M. D.*	0	10	0
Jenkins Richard	0	10	6
Jevons William	0	10	0
Jevons Thomas	1	0	0
Carried forward	£34	4	0

	£,	s.	d
Brought forward	34	4	0
Jevons Timothy	0	5	0
Jones Mrs Hugh	0	10	6
Jones John	0	10	0
K			
Kenrick Samuel S	0	5	0
Kershaw John	0	10	0
L			
Lawrence Miss, *Gateacre*	1	0	0
Lees Thomas	0	10	6
Leathwaite William	0	10	6
Lomax James	0	10	6
Lowndes M. D	0	7	0
M			
M'Viccar Miss	0	5	0
Mather Miss M	0	10	0
Mills Richard	1	0	0
Murray William	0	10	0
Musgrove Robert	1	0	0
N			
Needham Miss	0	2	6
Norris John	0	5	0
O			
Owen, —— *Prescot*	0	2	6
P			
Park Mrs	0	10	6
Parry Rev. James	0	10	0
Patten Edward	0	10	6
Pratt William	0	5	0
Preston Richard	0	10	6
Proctor Rv. T. W. *Prescot*	0	5	0
R			
Rawdon Mrs	1	0	0
Rawsthorne Jas. jun	0	10	6
Rigby William, *Prescot*	0	2	6
Robinson William	0	10	0
Carried up £	57	12	6

	£	s.	d.
Brought up	57	12	6
Robinson George	0	10	0
Robinson Joseph	0	10	0
Rogerson Mrs.	0	2	6
Roscoe Miss	0	10	6
Roscow Rowland	1	0	0
S			
Salter Thomas	1	0	0
Sandley John	0	2	6
Shepherd Rv. W. *Gateacre*	1	1	0
Simner James	0	3	0
Smith Miss	0	2	6
Smith William	0	3	0
Stokes William	0	7	6
T			
Tate James	0	3	0
Tate Michael	0	3	0
Tate Robert	0	3	0
Taylor Henry	1	0	0
Thornely Miss	0	5	0
W			
Wagstaff Thomas	0	2	6
Wainwright Miss	0	5	0
White William	0	10	6
Whitfield Miss	0	5	0
Wild Joseph	0	5	0
Wilson Mrs.	0	5	0
Wood John W	0	10	6
Wright F. B	0	5	0
Y			
Yates Rev. John	1	1	0
Yates J. B	0	10	6
Yates J. A	0	10	6
Yates R. V.	1	1	0
Yates P. H	0	10	6
Yates Miss J. E.	0	10	6
Total £	61	11	6

CATALOGUE.

In giving your orders, please to specify the Letters and Figures under which the Books may be found in the Catalogue, and also state the Price.

The Numbers marked with an asterisk (*) are inserted for the first time in the Catalogue.

		s.	d.
A 1.	Ashworth's Account of the Rise and Progress of the Unitarian Doctrine in the Societies at Rochdale, Newchurch in Rossendale, and other places..... 1817	1	0
2.	Aspland's Plea for Unitarian Dissenters, in a letter to the Rev. R. H. Norris, 2nd ed..... 1815	2	0
3.	Aspland's Sermon on the Power of Truth, preached before the Unitarian Society.....1815	1	6
4.	Aspland's Inquiry into the Nature of the Sin of Blasphemy,	3	0
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4.	Belsham's Review of Wilberforce's Practical View.....	5	6
5.	Belsham's Progress of Intellectual Improvement; with his answer to the Bishop of St. David's, *bds*.....1814	5	0
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		s.	d.
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2.	Eaton's Scripture the only guide to Religious Truth: A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Society of York Baptists, *bds*.....1809	2	6
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G 1.	Gifford's Elucidation of the Unity of God; with a Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 5th ed.....1815	6	0
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3.	Grundy's Sermon, preached at the opening of Renshaw Street Chapel, Liverpool 1811	0	6
4.*	Gifford's, (Capt. J.) *R. N.* Remonstrance of a Unitarian, addressed to the Bishop of St. David s 1818	2	6
H 1.	Harris's Sermon, "Unitarianism the only Religion that can become universal," with notes and an appendix.....1818	1	6
2.	Hartley, Dr., on the Truth of the Christian Religion, 12mo, bds. 1798	1	6

		s.	d.
H	3. Haynes's Scripture Account of the Attributes of God, and of the Character and Offices of Jesus Christ 1815	4	6
	4.* Hutton's Sermon on Acceptance with God 1819	1	0
J	1. Jevons's, William, Sermon preached before the Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Book and Tract Society.....1817	0	6
	2. Joyce's, Discourse on the Subserviency of Free Inquiry to Religious Knowledge 1816	1	0
	3.* John's, W. on the importance of the Scriptures, &c...1813	1	6
K	1. Kenrick's, Rev. J. (Sermon) Unitarianism the Essence of vital Christianity 1817	1	3
	2.* Knowles's, F. Reflections, &c. on the Athanasian Creed 1819	1	0
L	1. Lardner's, Dr Counsels of Prudence 1757	0	2
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	6. Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity, to which is added his Essay for the understanding of St. Paul's Epistles	3	6
	7. Lindsey's, Rev. Farewell Address to his Parishioners.....	0	3
	8. Lindsey's, Apology on resigning the Vicarage of Catterick, Yorkshire, 5th edition, 12mo. 1818	3	0
	9. Lindsey's Catechist; or an Inquiry into the Doctrine of the Scriptures concerning the only true God, and Object of Religious Worship, 3rd edition, 12mo.....	2	6
	10.* Letter from W. Roberts, of Madras, to the Unitarian Society in London.....1818	0	2
	11.* Letter 2nd from W. Roberts, to ditto.....1819	0	2
	12.* Letter to the Rev. the Clergy of both Universities, concerning the Trinity and the Athanasian Creed, (first printed in 1694).....	1	0
	13.* Letter to the Rev. Dr. Paterson, by Common Sense, on the Improved Version of the New Testament.....1818	0	2
	14.* Letter 2nd to the Rev. Dr. Paterson.....1818	0	2
	15.* Letters on Unitarianism, by another Barrister.....1818	5	0
M	1. Marsom on the Impersonality of the Holy Ghost, 3rd edit..	1	6
	2. Madge's Sermon on the Free Grace of God.....1815	1	6
	3.* Madge's Sermon on Religious Liberty 1817	1	0
	4.* Mardon's Letter to the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, with a statement of the evidence for Sir Isaac Newton's Unitarianism..1818	1	0
	5.* Mardon's Sermon, The Father of Jesus the Christian's God.	0	6
	6.* Mason on self-knowledge	2	6
	7.* Mental Wanderings, or Fragments on Superstition and Priestcraft 1819	3	0
N	1. New Testament, in an Improved Version, on the basis of Archbishop Newcome's Translation, (with Notes) super royal 8vo. 2nd edition	25	0

		s.	d.
N	2. New Testament, (Imp. Vers. Notes) demy 8vo. 4th ed....	10	6
	3 *New Testament, (Imp. Vers. Notes) demy 12mo 1819	7	0
O	1. Omicron's Unitarian's Reasons for his Faith and Practice..	0	2
	2. Omicron's Answer to Trinitarians	0	1
	3.* Omicron's Friendly Monitor, in reply to the Rev. Mr. Housman's Pastoral Visiter, on the Deity of Christ.....1819	X	6
P	1. Paley's Natural Theology, Analysis of, by J. Joyce.....	3	0
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	3. Priestley's and Price's Sermon's	2	0
	4. Priestley's Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion, 2 vols 12mo 4th edition	8	0
	5. Priestley's Tracts in controversy with Bishop Horsley, with an Appendix.....1815	10	6
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	9. Priestley's Memoirs of his own Life to 1795, with a Continuation by his Son	2	6
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	13.* Palmer's Protestant Dissenter's Catechism, 15th ed....1816	1	0
	14.* Platt's John Principles of Unitarians stated and explained	0	3
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	2. Racovian Catechism; to which is prefixed, a sketch of the History of Unitarianism on the Continent. By Thomas Rees, D. D. F. S. A. 12mo *bds* 1818	10	0
	3.* Rees Dr. Thomas. Discourse on the Duties of Filial Piety..	0	6
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S	1. Simpson's, John, Two Essays on the Effects of Christianity, and on the Sabbath.....1815	4	0
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	3. Smith's, John, designed End to the Socinian Controversy, first printed in 1695	0	6
	4. Smith's, T. Southwood, M. D. Illustrations of the Divine Government, 8vo, 2nd edition enlarged.....1818	9	0
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T	1. Taylor, John, D. D. Value of a Child, 2nd edition.....	2	6
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W 1.	Wellbeloved's Devotional Exercises, 5th edition.....1815	3	0
2.	Wright's (Richard) Essays, containing a Plain View of the Unitarian Christian Doctrine, 12mo *bds*.....	8	0
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7.	Wright's Essay on the Humanity of Christ, 4th edition....	0	8
8.	Wright's Essay on the Miraculous Conception.....	0	6
9.	Wright on the Existence of the Devil	1	0
10.	Wright on Future Punishment.....	0	8
11.	Wright on the Object, Nature, and Design of Religious Worship, 4th edition.....	0	6
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15.	Wright's Catechism in Scripture Language only, 3rd edit...	0	6
16.	Wright's Answer to the Question, Why are you not a Trinitarian?.....	0	3
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19.	Wright on the Principles of Dissent.....	0	6
20.	Wright on Original Sin.....	1	0
21.	Wright on Miracles	0	6
22.	Wright on Universal Restoration.....	0	6
23.	Wright's Answer to the Question, Why do you go to the Unitarian Chapel?.....	0	1
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25.	Wright's Essay on Election and Reprobation.....	1	6
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30.	Wright's (John) Sermon, for which a prosecution on a charge of Blasphemy was commenced 1817	0	3

		s.	d.
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34.* Wellbeloved's Doctrine of Instantaneous Conversion..	1818	1	6
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2. Yates's Sequel, in reply to Wardlaw's "Unitarianism Incapable of Vindication"	1817	3	0
3. Yates's Sermon on deciding Religious Controversies, preached at Edinburgh and Birmingham, 3rd edition.....	1817	1	0
4.* Yates's Sermon on Unitarian Dissent	1813	0	6
5.* Yates's Sermon on the Peculiar Doctrines of the Gospel	1819	1	0

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No. 2. On the Character of God	0	1
3. Priestley's Appeal to the Professors of Christianity	0	2
4. On the Person and Mediation of Christ.....	0	2
5. On the Power of Christianity to deliver from the fear of Death	0	1
8. On the Person, the Mission, Doctrine, &c. of Christ	0	1
9. Madge's Sermon on the Truth and Value of the Unitarian Doctrine.....	0	2
10. Jesus Christ a Man of Sorrows, a Sermon by Bealey	0	1
11. The True Nature of the Church of Christ, a Sermon by George Rogers, M. A.	0	1
12. Review of the Preaching of the Apostles, by J. Toulmin .	0	3
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18. The nature of the Kingdom or Church of Christ, a Sermon preached before King George I, by Bishop Hoadley	0	2
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These Tracts are free from any peculiar doctrines, and are well calculated to be put into the hands of Children and Servants.

Vol. 1, No. 1 to 12 of Do. *bds.*	2	6
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No. 1	William's Return	0	6
2.	Essay on Repentance	0	1
3.	Sir Francis and Henry	0	1
4.	William and Jacob	0	1
5.	Returning Prodigal, Part 1st.	0	1
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24.	Village Dialogues, part 5	0	3
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29.	The Widow	0	3
30.	Advice to Female Servants	0	4
31.	Serious Advice to the Young	0	1
32.	The Two Nursery Maids	0	3
33.	The Two Farmers	0	3
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F. B. Wright, Printer, Liverpool.

Sd Harris

THIRD ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

LIVERPOOL

Unitarian Tract Society,

1st *July*, 1820.

THE Committee cannot resign the trust reposed in them for the past year, without feelings of considerable satisfaction that their labours have been recompensed by the increasing prosperity and utility of the Society. Opportunities for gratuitous distribution having in several instances occurred since their last Report, they have thought it their duty to avail themselves of them, and by this means a considerable number of Books and Tracts have been circulated, both on controversial and practical subjects, the latter including many of those originally published by the LONDON CHRISTIAN TRACT SOCIETY, and designed "*to inculcate moral conduct on Christian principles.*" Notwithstanding these donations, and the great proportion of Books and Tracts claimed by Subscribers, the Committee have the satisfaction of seeing a considerable addition made to the permanent stock of the Society. With a view to render the Catalogue as comprehensive and as useful as possible, a number of works have been added to it, and the Committee recommend that the Depository should at all times contain an extensive collection of publications, both of a controversial and a *practical* nature.

The Committee have thought it desirable to excite, as much as possible, a spirit of union with other societies founded on the principles which led to the establishment of this Institution; and for this purpose their Secretary has entered into a correspondence in instances where a similar wish was entertained, with a view to more efficient co-operation and mutual support. By such means a better understanding is promoted between those engaged in one common cause, whilst, by the exchange of Books and Tracts, the interests of each party are frequently much assisted.

At the request of the Committee, the Secretary has replied to the communications of individuals in several places in Ireland and America, who had expressed a wish to avail themselves of the local advantages afforded for being supplied with Unitarian publications from the Society's Depository. Orders

for Books and Tracts have in consequence been received from several quarters, many of them for the purpose of being reprinted. It is therefore to be hoped that the spirit of pure Christianity, which knows no distinction of country, will be more widely diffused, and permanently cherished; and it has added no little to the satisfaction of the Committee that they have thus been enabled to extend their sphere of usefulness, and to assist in carrying into effect the objects of the LONDON UNITARIAN SOCIETY, established for the purpose of "*promoting christian knowledge and the practice of virtue, by the distribution of Books.*"

In conclusion, the Committee cannot but call on all rational professing Christians, to aid the progress of that glorious *Reformation*, already rapidly proceeding, and which promises ultimately to root out the remaining corruptions of Christianity; recollecting that whilst we anxiously contend for that purity of heart and conduct which is essential to salvation, we are also enjoined, on the highest possible authority, "*in understanding to be men.*" In vain will some of the best and wisest of the human race have devoted their talents and lives to the cause of Divine Truth, if we avail not ourselves of the light shed around by their labours, and *furnish to others* the means of profiting by their investigations. If the writings of these faithful Ministers of Christ are to become of general benefit, no exertions ought to be spared to promote their circulation to the utmost, and we should ill discharge the duty we owe to our God, and our brethren of mankind, were we to neglect any opportunity of dispensing around us the blessings of that knowledge which we have ourselves so liberally received.

"Above all things," says Dr. Priestley, "be careful to improve and make use of the *Reason* which God has given you, to be the guide of your lives, to check the extravagance of your passions, and to assist you in acquiring that *Knowledge*, without which your rational powers will be of no advantage to you. Cherish the most unfeigned gratitude to the *Father of lights*, that your minds are no longer bewildered with the gloom and darkness in which our excellent religion was for so many ages involved; but let this consideration be a motive with you to walk as becomes so glorious a light. If your conduct be such, as, instead of recommending your own generous principles, furnishes an excuse to others, for acquiescing in their prejudices and errors, all the dishonour which is thereby thrown upon God, and the injury which will be done to the pure religion of Jesus Christ, by keeping it longer in a corrupt state at home, and preventing its propagation abroad, will be your peculiar guilt, and greatly aggravate your condemnation."

Dr. *The Liverpool Unitarian Tract Society, in Cash and Stock Account.* *Cr.*

To Amount paid for Books, viz.						
The Unitarian Society, (*London.*) ..	£36	0	9			
The Christian Tract Society (*Ditto*)	2	1	0			
Rowland Hunter..... ..(*Ditto*)	9	0	8			
F. B. Wright (*Liverpool*).....	16	6	0			
Taylor & Wilmer (*Ditto*)	1	1	0			
Rev. James Yates (*Birmingham*) ..	0	8	0			
				64	17	5
Paid Printing and Stationery.....	6	6	0			
Advertising Monthly Repository and Christian Reformer.... ...	6	8	6			
A Book Case for the Society's use..	5	5	0			
Carriage, Postage, &c.....	1	5	5			
				13	4	11
Paid Subscription to the Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Book and Tract Society	2	2	0			
Do to the Eastern Unitarian Society	2	2	0			
Do. to the Birmingham Unitarian Tract Society	2	2	0			
				6	6	0
Balance				8	17	9
				£93	6	1
Amount due to the Unitarian Society (*London*).....	5	10	3			
Do. to the Christian Tract Society (*Do*)	2	18	9			
Ditto to R. Hunter (*Ditto*).....	13	11	9			
Ditto to the Birmingham Unitarian Tract Society	14	15	2			
				36	15	11
Balance				44	15	11
				£81	11	10

Audited, H. TAYLOR, & F. B. WRIGHT.

By Balance from last Report.....				£12	3	0
Arrears of Subscriptions received..				2	2	0
124 Annual Subscriptions.....	66	17	0			
Deduct 15 in Arrears	5	14	0			
				61	3	0
Amount Received for Books and Tracts sold				17	18	1
				£93	6	1
Balance in the hands of the Treasurer.....				8	17	9
Arrears due to the Society.....				5	14	0
Stock of Books and Tracts on hand, valued at one sixth less than the Catalogue Prices..				67	0	1
				£81	11	10
Balance in favour of the Society.....				£44	15	11

3rd July, 1820.

At the Third Annual Meeting of the Subscribers, held in Renshaw Street Chapel,

L. J. JARDINE, M. D. *in the Chair,*

the foregoing Report of the Committee, and the Treasurer's Accounts, having been read, it was

Unanimously Resolved,

THAT they are approved by this Meeting, and are ordered to be printed, together with the list of Subscribers, the Catalogue, and Rules of the Society.

THAT the thanks of the Meeting be given to the Committee, for their exertions to promote the welfare of the Society.

THAT the following Gentlemen, *Rev. John Yates, Mr. Jos. Hancox, Mr. J. R. Freme,* and *Mr. T. Cooper,* be chosen as Members of the Committee, in lieu of the *Rev. J. Parry, Mr. R. V. Yates, Mr. Jevons,* and *Mr. Musgrove,* who retire from office.

Committee for the Year.

L. J. JARDINE, M. D CHAIRMAN.

MR. THOS. JEVONS, TREASURER.—MR. H. TAYLOR, SECRETARY.

MR. T. COOPER,
MR. J R. FREME,
MR. JOS. HANCOX,
REV G HARRIS,
MR. ROGER HUNTER,
MR. ELI JAGGER,
MR. WM. LEWTHWAITE,
MR, F. B. WRIGHT,
REV. J. YATES.

Communications (post paid) may be addressed to the Secretary, MR. H. TAYLOR, 47, Bold Street. Subscriptions and Benefactions will be received by the Treasurer, or by any Member of the Committee.

The Society's Depository is in the Vestry of Renshaw Street Chapel, but orders for Books and Tracts may be left in the Committee Rooms of Paradise and Renshaw Street Chapels, where Catalogues may be had.

SIR,

I am desired to remind you that your Subscription to the LIVERPOOL UNITARIAN TRACT SOCIETY is due, which you are requested to pay to Mr. THOS. JEVONS, the Treasurer, or to any member of the Committee.

The Committee also request you to give an order for such Books or Tracts as you wish to have from the Depository, agreeably to the 4th, 5th, and 7th Laws of the Society.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

H. TAYLOR.

47, *Bold Street*, 1*st July*, 1820. *Secretary.*

RULES.

1. The Society shall be denominated The *Liverpool Unitarian Tract Society*.

2. The term *Unitarianism*, is used by the Society to denote the belief that the father *alone* is God, and the *only* proper object of Religious Worship; and the Books or Tracts provided for circulation, shall be such only, as are consistent with that grand Truth, and conducive to the increase of Piety and Virtue.

3. The Society shall be supported, by annual Subscriptions and Benefactions: every Subscriber of two shillings and sixpence, or upwards, annually, shall be a Member, and be entitled to vote as soon as his Subscription is paid. All subscriptions shall be considered as due on the 1st of July every year, and will be understood to be continued annually, unless notice to the contrary be given to the Secretary.

4. Every Member shall be entitled to receive an annual allotment of Books or Tracts to the amount of his Subscription, at the prices marked in the Society's Catalogue: no one however shall receive any allotment while his Subscription is in arrear.

5. Each Subscriber shall, within three months from the annual Meeting, give to the Secretary, a list from the Catalogue, of such Books or Tracts, as he wishes to have for his allotment; after the expiration of which time no claim can be made, but the Books then remaining unclaimed, together with all such as are purchased with Funds arising from Donations, shall be at the disposal of the Committee.

6. Every Member shall be entitled to purchase any number of Books or Tracts from the Society, at the prices marked in the Catalogue, on paying for them at the time of delivery.

7. No Books or Tracts shall be delivered without a written order to the Secretary. Letters must be free of postage, and all Books or Tracts to be taken away without any expense to the Society, but they will be forwarded to Subscribers residing at a distance, agreeably to their directions.

8. A Committee shall be appointed consisting of twelve Members, six from Paradise Street Congregation, and six from Renshaw Street Congregation, who shall choose from among themselves a Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Auditors. One third part of the Committee shall annually go out of Office.

9. A meeting of the Members shall be held on the first Monday in July in every year, alternately in Paradise Street and Renshaw Street Chapels, of which due notice will be given, when a statement of the funds and transactions of the Society for the past Year shall be laid before the Members, vacancies in the Committee shall be filled up, and other general business transacted.

10. The Chairman of the Committee shall preside at all Meetings of the Society, or in his absence some other Member of the Committee.

11. The Committee shall meet on the first Wednesday in every Month, or oftener if required, when four Members shall be competent to act, and their proceedings shall be entered in a book to be kept by the Secretary.

12. The Committee shall have the selection or Printing of the Books or Tracts, but any Member may propose for their consideration any Book or Tract that he may think proper.

13. A Catalogue of Books and Tracts, with the prices annexed, shall be annually prepared and published by the Committee.

14. An extraordinary General Meeting may be called at any time, upon a requisition signed by six Members, addressed to the Chairman of the Committee, of which Meeting due notice must be given, stating the business to be brought forward.

15. No Law can be made or repealed, but at a General Meeting; fourteen days notice of the intended alteration must be left with the Secretary, and in all cases the majority present shall decide.

Subscribers.

The Names of new Subscribers are printed in Italics.

	£.	s.	d.
A			
Avison Thomas	0	10	6
Atkinson John	0	10	0
Atkinson D. F.	0	10	0
B			
Banks Mrs.	1	1	0
Bennett Edward	0	3	0
Birmingham Unitarian Tract Society	2	2	0
Bolton Thomas	1	1	0
Booth George	1	1	0
Booth Henry	0	10	0
Broadbent Mrs	1	0	0
Bulmer G D	0	10	6
Burraston James	0	10	0
Bywater John	0	5	0
C			
Clear John, *Cork*	0	10	6
Clifford Thomas	0	5	0
Corbet William	0	2	6
Corfe Joseph	0	5	0
Cox Edward	0	10	6
Cox George L	0	10	6
D			
Davies Rev. J. *Wavertree*	0	10	0
Denman Miss	0	3	0
Durning William	0	10	0
E			
Eastern Unitarian Society	2	2	0
Eckersly James	0	10	6
Ellison Henry	0	10	0
Elton, Mrs	0	5	0
Edwards John	0	7	0
F			
Finch John	0	5	0
Fletcher Thomas	0	10	0
Freme John R.	1	0	0
Freme James	1	1	0
Carried up	£19	11	6

	£.	s.	d.
Amount brought up	19	11	6
French Mrs.	0	10	0
Friend & H. Ellison	0	5	0
G			
Gaskell Miss	0	10	0
Gaskell Miss A	0	10	0
Gibbons Timothy	0	10	0
Gill George	0	5	0
Gillibrand John	0	5	0
Guy John	0	5	0
Guy John, Jun	0	3	0
H			
Hamilton R. William	1	0	0
Hancox Joseph	0	10	0
Harris Rev. Geo.	0	10	0
Harris James	0	10	0
Harvey William	1	0	0
Harvey John	0	10	0
Harvey James	1	0	0
Harvey Samuel	1	0	0
Harvey Enoch	1	0	0
Harvey Robert	0	10	0
Haslingden James	0	5	0
Hazledine John	0	5	0
Henry Daniel	0	10	0
Heywood Miss B	1	0	0
Huddleston John	1	1	0
Hunter Roger	0	10	0
J			
Jagger Eli	0	10	0
Jagger Thomas	0	5	0
James Miss	0	10	0
James Miss C.	0	10	0
Jardine L. J. *M. D.*	0	10	0
Jenkins Richard	0	10	6
Jevons William	0	10	0
Jevons Thomas	1	0	0
Carried forward	£38	1	0

	£.	s.	d.
Brought forward	38	1	0
Jevons Timothy	0	5	0
Jones Mrs. Hugh.....	0	10	6
Jones John.....	0	10	0
K			
Kenrick Samuel S.	0	5	0
Kershaw John	0	10	0
L			
Lancashire and Cheshire Unitarian Book and Trust Society	2	2	0
Lawrence Miss, *Gateacre*	1	0	0
Lees Thomas.....	0	10	6
Lewthwaite William....	0	10	6
Lomax James	0	10	6
Lowndes M. D	0	7	0
M			
M'Viccar Miss	0	5	0
Mather Miss M.....	0	5	0
Mills Richard	1	0	0
Murray William	0	10	0
Musgrove Robert.....	1	0	0
N			
Needham Miss	0	2	6
Norris John	0	5	0
O			
Owen, —— *Prescot*	0	2	6
P			
Park Mrs.	0	10	0
Parry Rev. James	0	10	0
Patten Edward.....	0	10	6
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